VIRTUE ETHICS AND THE NARRATIVE IDENTITY OF AMERICAN LIBRARIANSHIP

1876 TO PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to propose a means of reconciling the competing ideas of library and information science's identity, thereby strengthening professional autonomy. I make the case that developing a system of virtue ethics for librarianship would be an effective way to promote that reconciliation. The first step in developing virtue ethics is uncovering librarianship's function. Standard approaches to virtue ethics rely on classical Greek ideas about the nature of being to determine function. Since classical ideas of being may no longer be persuasive, I introduce another approach to uncover librarianship's function that still meets all of the criteria needed to establish a foundation for a system of virtue ethics. This approach is hermeneutical phenomenology, the philosophical discipline of interpreting the meaning given to historical events. Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic circle technique and Paul Ricoeur's theory of narrative intelligence are used to engage in a dialogue with three crises in the history of American librarianship. These pivotal events are the fiction question, librarian nationalism during World War I, and the dispute between supporters of the "Library Bill of Rights" and social responsibility. From these crises, three recurring themes become apparent: the tendency to reconcile idealism and pragmatism, the intent to do good for individuals and society, and the role of professional insecurity in precipitating the conflicts. Through emplotment of these themes, an identity narrative for librarianship emerges. My finding is that librarianship's function is the promotion of stability-happiness. This is the dual-process of supporting dominant socio-cultural institutions as a means of protecting librarianship's ability to offer the knowledge, cultural
records, and avenues for information literacy that can improve lives and facilitate individuals' pursuit of happiness. In the conclusion, the ethical implications of having stability-happiness as the profession's function are considered. It includes a discussion of how librarianship's narrative identity could be applied to develop an ethical character for the profession and how such a character, combined with knowledge of function, might address persistent problems of race and gender disparity in library and information science.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my compassionate and supportive family, Tim and Margie; to Jason, for the worlds we make together; and most of all, to Andrea, my daring, romantic accomplice whose dauntless faith in me saw me through. Any hope I have of flourishing in this life is because of you all.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Librarianship in the United States is experiencing a crisis in its professional autonomy, that is, its capacity to act independently in accord with the values or highest purpose of the profession.¹ This crisis in autonomy exists because the profession has two identities that operate concurrently within the same discipline. One identity is associated with librarianship and the other, with information science. Together these two identities comprise the academic discipline known as Library and Information Science. The librarianship identity is grounded by its association with the library as place and concept. The information science identity is grounded by its emphasis on research in the theory and practical use of information. Although both identities of the discipline share an accrediting body, often co-existing in the same graduate program and awarding the same degree, and have a common history, the differences in identity and corresponding vision for the profession challenge the unity of the discipline. At present, with competing identities disagreeing over what values or purposes should define the profession, it is difficult for those pursuing librarianship to know to what purpose they should aspire. Unless the two identities can be reconciled, there is the potential that, in decades to come, the one discipline might divide into two, to the detriment of both. Specifically, it seems that librarianship benefits from the breadth of information science's conceptual domain and dedication to innovation, and

¹ My study focuses exclusively on librarianship within the United States. Similar economic, philosophical, and scholarly domain changes are occurring in other countries, but those developments lie beyond the scope of this project. Herein, when I use the generic terms librarian and librarianship, I intend them to refer only to the American institutions.
information science benefits from librarianship's traditional contributions to the public good and tangible presence in daily life. This study represents my efforts to identify a means to reconcile the two identities across a common idea of the profession's function from a virtue ethics perspective.

Two factors precipitated the division in identity: 1) a change in the way society assigns value to knowledge and 2) a difference in perspective on how the profession should respond to that change. The last thirty years have seen the rise of globalization, the prevalence of computer networks and their sophistication, and the rapid increase in the volume of scientific, scholarly, and creative works. The United States has transitioned into what Daniel Bell identifies as a post-industrial economy wherein ideas, instead of raw materials, form the basis for capital. As sociologists Walter E. Powell and Kaisa Snellman point out, an economy fueled by endless new ideas requires continuous access to stores of knowledge to thrive. Economists Paul A. David and Dominique Foray claim that transitioning into an idea-based economy has encouraged the commodification of knowledge, transforming it from something with intrinsic value to intangible capital for economic growth. The key consequence of these changes is that the dominant model society uses to value knowledge has shifted from the public good model to one based on the commodification of knowledge. With this change, one can see a fundamental shift in society's approach to education, research, and its rationale for managing knowledge. Central to the

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2 Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society*, 121.

3 Powell and Snellman, “The Knowledge Economy,” 201.


5 A public good is defined here as a shared resource cultivated for the use of a delineated group. Commodification is defined here as the process of transforming a substance into a form suitable for trade in a market economy. For more on the foundation of the information economy see Frank Webster, *Theories of the Information Society*, 9.
identity and practice of librarianship is the management of knowledge. Thus, any change in how society values knowledge impacts the perceived purpose of librarianship.

The established identity of librarianship, particularly public librarianship, has been that of stewarding knowledge as a public good. Quantifying contributions to the public good is difficult, and as a result, libraries and library schools have sought new ways of justifying their worth. Research librarian Judith A. Jablonski reports that the closing of three library schools in the 1980s prompted the profession to respond with significant changes in practice and pedagogy in order to maintain the appearance of professional and disciplinary relevance. New information and communication technologies were not responsible for the autonomy crisis; embracing new technologies and new ways to serve the user are signs of a healthy library profession. Rather, what sparked the crisis was a difference in how supporters of the information science branch embraced the change in how knowledge was valued to raise information science's status within the discipline.

The new vision for the purpose of the discipline focused on researching information as a concept, rather than as a service to community. This distinction in disciplinary focus began long before the conversion to a knowledge economy, but it provided an opportunity to press the issue. The information-centric group, associated with the iCaucus movement, argues that the

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6 As stewards of knowledge, librarians have been held responsible for preserving libraries as universities for the people, which facilitated cultural assimilation and provided a necessary foundation for participatory democracy.

7 Jablonski, “What’s in a Name?” 3.

8 While in this study I pursue librarianship's function and seek to strengthen librarians' autonomy, I do so not in preference for librarians over information scientists, but rather in recognition that information science already has a compelling vision and a caucus for disseminating that vision. If librarianship is to be an equal partner in the discipline, it needs an equally strong vision. I should state explicitly here that I hold information science to be a vital part of librarianship. I do not see the relationship between librarians and information scientists as a zero sum game, but as one where both branches benefit from the strength of the other. The harm comes from a division in identity, not from divisions in approach.

9 Roots of this division extend back to the late 1930s with the documentation movement and continued in the 1960s
The best way forward is in the "understanding of the uses and users of information, the nature of information itself, as well as information technologies and their applications."\(^{10}\) This group sought and continues to seek to rebrand the profession as one on the cutting edge of technology, participating in ushering in a new information age. Around the same time, as scholar of information studies Candy Davis points out, the idea that libraries were in crisis and that librarians were a dying breed gained traction and created an exaggerated contrast between the two perspectives within the library and information science discipline, as well as an unfortunate division in identity. The use of the word information in the name of graduate programs increased, as did technology and information science-centric classes.\(^{11}\)

The information-centric narrative elicited a variety of responses, ranging from overt conflict to attempts at reconciliation. In his 2004 essay, “Whither Library Education,” past president of the American Library Association Michael Gorman reacted to this trend by arguing that hosting information science curricula, in programs accredited by the American Library Association, does a disservice to society by diluting the ability of graduate programs to produce future librarians who are competent in library practice.\(^ {12}\) Theorist of information science Blaise Cronin delineates the two camps as being followers of the "I-word" or the "L-word" for their emphasis on either information or libraries as the focus of the profession and speculates that a

\(^{10}\) The iSchool movement is an allied group of graduate programs for the education of librarians, information scientists, and technologists. This group shares a vision for the future of the library and information science discipline that prioritizes research in the uses of information over preparing students to work in traditional library environments. Graduate programs must apply for membership and must meet certain criteria in order to be admitted. For more on the iSchool movement see: iSchools, “The Purpose of the iSchools,” accessed May 13, 2013.


divorce between the two might be fruitful for both.\textsuperscript{13} As Finnish scholar Pertti Vakkari points out, the relationship between librarianship and information science as disciplines is complex. Possibly, one will subsume the other, or the two might break off to become distinct disciplines. However, Vakkari asserts that since information science accounts for all theories of library science, it is meaningless to talk about library science as a separate discipline.\textsuperscript{14} Examining enrollment in ALA-accredited Master's degree programs, scholar of library services and knowledge management Danny P. Wallace downplays the significance of the distinction between the two, concluding that broadening the field provides for a more secure future.\textsuperscript{15} Expert in intellectual freedom John N. Berry also carves out a shared space by emphasizing the good that courses in librarianship's ethical traditions bring to graduate schools of information.\textsuperscript{16} Scholar of information science Marcia J. Bates also attempts to reconcile the two approaches by pointing out their shared "core relationship to the material of their work."\textsuperscript{17} Researcher in gender studies and information use Roma M. Harris critiques the role gender norms play in the perception of work performed by librarians versus the work of information scientists.\textsuperscript{18} Shifting the narrative used to communicate the worth of librarianship distances it from the distinctly feminine character of the profession's history while adopting a worldview that devalues service to community privileges the ability to stimulate knowledge capital.

\textsuperscript{13} Cronin, “Cutting the Gordian Knot,” 897.

\textsuperscript{14} Vakkari, “Library and Information Science,” 6.


\textsuperscript{16} Berry, “Why I-Schools Need Library,” 10.

\textsuperscript{17} Bates, “The Invisible Substrate of Information Science,” 1047.

\textsuperscript{18} Harris, Librarianship, xiii.
This study presents a means of facilitating reconciliation by introducing virtue ethics into the discipline's existing professional ethics. A shared ethical heritage forms a bridge between both groups, and an ethical system that requires knowledge of the profession's function is uniquely suited to finding a common position from which to operate. For the health of the profession, I posit, it is necessary to develop a means of moving past the competitive mindset and instead begin to engage actively in reconciling these positions; librarianship cannot have two divergent identities and still be able to define a coherent and effective future. The vitality of a society depends on both short and long term investments in its people. American society needs knowledge capital to fuel innovation, but no less so does it need healthy, informed, and entertained communities.

**Thesis and Approach**

The purpose of this dissertation is to propose virtue ethics as a means of reconciling divergent ideas of the intellectual domain of librarianship and, thus, strengthening professional autonomy. My thesis is that librarianship in the United States has an *ergon*, a unique task or responsibility, and that articulating this *ergon* would enable librarians to develop a professional virtue ethic.¹⁹ Not just the occupational function of librarians, the concept of *ergon* provides a basis for the enduring character of librarianship. The character of a profession is a trait demonstrated through the choices made in difficult situations. Therefore, this study aims to identify the *ergon* of librarianship, as it was constructed in three difficult situations of self-

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¹⁹ *Ergon* is a Greek term meaning work or task. It is associated with another Greek term, *technē* meaning craft or art. Farming and medicine are examples of *technē*. The *ergon* of these two are to produce food and good health, respectively. Thus, if librarianship is an art or craft, then it too has a characteristic task or responsibility.
determination for the profession. The three selected for this study all arose in times of crisis, when librarians struggled to redefine their profession's obligations and scope.

This study applies hermeneutical phenomenology to interpret the meaning librarians gave to the conclusions they drew, across different times and places, for defining their profession. The process of interpretation occurs through the synthesis of two theories of hermeneutical phenomenology. I use Hans-Georg Gadamer's implementation of the hermeneutical circle to engage in a conversation with each controversy, being receptive to the meaning given to each crisis, and seek a fusion of horizons with each. I use Paul Ricoeur's narrative structure approach to draw out themes that are common to each crisis in order to emplot the three crises into a single identity narrative. My aim is to demonstrate that an identity narrative is sufficiently analogous to ergon to serve as the basis of a virtue ethic and to do so in a way that privileges the experiences of practicing librarians.

The three discursive controversies this study engages with are the fiction question of the late 19th century, the question of librarian nationalism during World War I, and the questions of contention between supporters of the Library Bill of Right and of social responsibility in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the first, the profession questioned the relationship between librarianship and culture; in the second, the relationship between librarianship and state; and in the third, the relationship between librarianship and society. If similar conclusions emerge in how librarianship responds to each kind of crisis, the idea of a distinct ergon would seem to be supported. My decision to use these particular crises is based on my judgment that they are the

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20 G. W. F. Hegel uses the term self-determination in his Philosophy of Right to capture the dialectical process by which the universal and subjective will are brought into unity. This is the process by which a social institution develops the capacity of acting freely. For librarianship, it is the process by which the needs of society and the collective preferences of the profession are reconciled to produce positive freedom to act.

21 Emplotment is Ricoeur's technique of placing discrete events into a narrative in such a way as to construct a coherent and thematic narrative. For more on the process of emplotment see Ricoeur, “Narrative Identity,” 73.
ones that most clearly possess characteristics that will shed light on the profession's current autonomy crisis. These characteristics include the profession reconciling competing identities, forming ideas of how the profession functions in light of some challenge; and what capacities it has to influence society, culture, or state. This freedom to pursue the needs of the questioner is in keeping with Gadamer's understanding that it is never truly possible to fully understand the subject one is conversing with, so full disclosure of what is meaningful for the questioner is imperative.\footnote{Barthold, “Gadamer, Hans-Georg,” sec. 3b par. 7.}

Significance of the Problem

If adopted, a professional virtue ethic would provide a practical means for librarians to defend their core professional values, including democracy, social responsibility, and the public good, which are difficult to quantify and to market but central to their professional identity. Furthermore, while the autonomy crisis persists, it is impossible to resolve two pressing problems that have plagued the profession for most of its existence. First, the profession has long sought to resolve the issues of reduced status within both the academy and society associated with the "feminization" of the profession in the late 19th century. This problem is the consequence of the systematic devaluing of women and the work of women in American society and the temptation to model the "masculinized" professions and instead working to promote the value and usefulness of all aspects of librarianship's professional activity. The second pressing problem for the profession is the matter of the underrepresentation of people from ethnic and racial minorities within the discipline, both as librarians and information scientists and as instructors in the library and information science discipline. Coming to an understanding of
librarianship's function from a virtue ethics perspective may provide both the autonomy and the insight needed to find and implement solutions to these and other similarly systemic problems.

I argue that the American library profession would benefit from incorporating virtue ethics into its existing professional ethics and values statements. A series of key documents capture the ideas that establish the appropriate way for librarians carry out their duties to patrons, society and one another.\(^{23}\) These professional ethics were recently supplemented with a statement of core values.\(^{24}\) Together, they constitute the parameters for discussions about what is and what is not ethical behavior for librarianship. Introducing virtue ethics is a way of expanding those parameters. Instead of only being able to discuss right behavior or good outcomes, virtue ethics introduces the idea that developing strength of character can be an approach to professional ethics.

Values and virtues are different concepts. A value affirms that an idea is of enduring importance. A virtue is a behavior that supports a moral good.\(^{25}\) The objective of virtue ethics is to live purposefully. Thus, the appropriate way live, according to a virtue ethic, is to make one's purpose central in one's decisions. Developing a virtue ethics as a professional ethic is worth pursuing because it creates a normative relationship between teleology and ethics.\(^{26}\) Through this normative relationship, the way to be ethical is devotion to one's purpose, or telos.\(^{27}\)

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\(^{23}\) The major documents comprising American librarianship's ethical corpus consist of the “Library Bill of Rights,” “Code of Ethics of the American Library Association,” “Core Values of Librarianship,” and the “Freedom to Read Statement.”


\(^{25}\) The word virtue comes from the Greek term arête, which means excellence. To pursue virtue is to pursue excellence. The virtues of being a librarian are those traits which help the librarian fulfill the library's purpose. What these virtues are, thus, depend of discovering that purpose. Determining those traits would be a direction for further research in the virtue ethics of librarianship.

\(^{26}\) Here, I refer to teleology as the philosophical study of goal-directed activity, telos.

\(^{27}\) Fulfilling the normative relationship involves developing a character that naturally pursues virtues that lead to
Advocates of modern virtue ethics argue for its viability as third approach to normative ethics, in addition to deontological and consequential approaches.\(^{28}\) It is a person-centric ethic, according to Rosalind Hursthouse, so the fundamental question that virtue ethics asks of us is "how should a person live?"\(^{29}\) According to ethicist Daniel Statma, the corresponding answer is to develop one's character in fulfillment of one's purpose.\(^{30}\) What this suggests is that it is important for librarians to assume responsibility for developing the profession's its character, and turn it towards fulfilling its purpose, since from the virtue ethics perspective fulfilling purpose is what constitutes the good life. If virtue ethics were to be adopted, acting to fulfill the purpose of librarianship, then, gets placed in the same category of professional obligation as defending intellectual freedom, privacy, and free access to information. For a profession that periodically finds its identity, scope, and continued relevance questioned, a system of professional virtue ethics would enhance professional autonomy in a way that would enable the professional librarian to be able to counter such questions of relevance with a belief that being "librarial" is an ethical good. The goal is not to limit the adaptability of librarianship, but rather to provide a mechanism for communicating that profession is not just viable but essential. Any adaptations that occur should be consistent with its purpose and not just with the quantifiable outcomes of library services. In this way, the outcome for this study of a virtue ethic for librarianship is two-

\(^{28}\) Deontological ethics, or Kantian ethics, posit that the appropriate way to live is to adhere to ones duties to society. In pure Kantianism, these duties are rational and universal. Consequentialism posits that the appropriate way to live is to review the consequences of one's actions and judge them against some standard of the good. Utilitarianism is a prominent form of consequentialism. More about virtue's ethics' distinction from these other normative forms of ethics can be read in Crisp and Slote, *Virtue Ethics*, 1.

\(^{29}\) Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, 3.

\(^{30}\) Statma, *Virtue Ethics*, 7.
fold: 1) identifying the *ergon* of librarianship and 2) communicating it in a way that is empowering for practicing librarians.

According to philosopher of librarianship John M. Budd, economic pressure on libraries and schools of librarianship and information studies to justify their worth in terms of measurable commodities is considerable,\(^\text{31}\) due in part to ongoing financial constraints. The pressure also stems from a change in the way Western society prefers to determine value. The rise to prominence of neo-liberalism began in the late 1970s and early 1980s and stimulated a corresponding shift in approach to library management.\(^\text{32}\) In his book, *Dismantling the Public Sphere*, John Buschman argues that without a narrative response to this pressure, librarians and LIS educators easily gravitate towards emphasizing readily measurable products of the profession over ones that are difficult to commodify.\(^\text{33}\) Michael Gorman proposed, in *Our Enduring Values*, an axiomatic response to pressures external to the goals and purposes of the profession. In particular, Gorman sought to emphasize values that point to an end-state, or the "process of being what you want to become."\(^\text{34}\) Transitioning from the decision to emphasize values to a full strategy to defend them requires a systematic method. This study pursues the possibility of using virtue ethics as that systematic method.

Since virtue ethics are person-centric and a professional organization is a collective body, one might well ask whether a person-centered ethic is viable as a professional ethic. Most

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\(^\text{32}\) Neo-liberalism is a movement within political philosophy that establishes the free market as the ultimate arbiter of value. Objectives of neo-liberalism include shrinking the size of government, promoting privatization, and market deregulation. Even though it has existed since the 1930s, in practice it only became potent when allied with political conservatism in Great Britain and the United States with Thatcherism and Reaganomics respectively. For more on neo-liberalism and librarianship, see John Buschman, “Libraries and the Decline of Public Purposes,” 11.

\(^\text{33}\) Buschman, *Dismantling the Public Sphere*, 85.

\(^\text{34}\) Gorman, *Our Enduring Values*, 7.
scholarship in modern virtue ethics focuses on inquiry into personal morality.\textsuperscript{35} However, practical efforts to implement the person-centered approach for use as a professional ethic have begun to emerge.\textsuperscript{36} Essays on virtue ethics for medicine, law, nursing practice, psychology, and social work exist, but thus far, no work has been published developing virtue ethics for librarianship. The viability of virtue ethics as a professional ethic depends on whether or not a profession has a "character," in the way that a person does, and if that character can be turned toward fulfilling a specific purpose, or \textit{telos}.

Aristotle's \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} and \textit{Poetics} are pivotal sources for understanding virtue ethics and the concept of character, respectively. The Greek word for character is \textit{ethos}, meaning custom, usage, manner, or habit. In the \textit{Poetics}, section 1450b8, Aristotle defines character as "that which reveals choice, shows what sort of thing a man chooses or avoids in circumstances where the choice is not obvious."\textsuperscript{37} In his treatise on the art of civic discourse, the \textit{Rhetoric}, Aristotle labels \textit{ēthos}, which is a concept closely related to \textit{ethos} with a short e, as a primary form of proof for a speaker. He claims it is most significant in producing conviction because audience members judge the merit of what is said by the qualities the speaker demonstrates he possesses and how they are disposed toward those qualities.\textsuperscript{38} The \textit{Oxford English Dictionary} defines as, "The characteristic spirit, prevalent tone of sentiment, of a people or community; the


\textsuperscript{36} See, for example, Oakley and Cocking, \textit{Virtue Ethics and Professional Roles}, 2; McBeath and Webb, “Virtue Ethics and Social Work,” 1015; Armstrong, “Towards a Strong Virtue Ethics for Nursing Practice,” 111; Jordan and Meara, “Ethics and the Professional Practice of Psychologists,” 107; and Weed and McKeown, “Epidemiology and Virtue Ethics,” 343.


\textsuperscript{38} Aristotle, \textit{Rhetoric}, trans. J.H. Freese, 2.1.3.
‘genius’ of an institution or system.” These definitions demonstrate that the concept of character extends to groups and institutions and is revealed in the choices made by those groups and institutions. In order for those choices to be turned away from immediate pragmatic considerations and towards a specific end, a *telos*, that reason for being must be persuasively more important than the immediate concern.

**Rationale of the Study**

What does finding the *telos* of librarianship entail? The process has historically been framed as the answer to the question, "why does librarianship exist?" Obviously, answering that question is far beyond the scope of a study such as this. Besides, elegant teleologies of librarianship and libraries already exist. The first task of this study is to demonstrate that these existing teleologies are not sufficiently normative to serve as the basis for a virtue ethic. These teleologies tend to be driven by interdisciplinary theory, are somewhat abstract, and may impact pedagogy for librarianship more than actual professional practice. Rather than develop another top down approach to theory, this study takes a bottom up approach. For a teleological theory to serve as a source of normative ethical authority, it must speak to the lived experiences of librarians. Here, I do not intend to imply that librarians are uninterested in theory, quite the opposite, but if the argument is to feel legitimate to the broadest possible cohort of librarians, it must be theory driven by praxis. One fruitful place to search for discourse about the profession's *telos* is where librarians are engaged in the task of defining the work of the profession in light of immediate and practical problems.

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39 “Ethos, n.”, *OED Online*.

40 Examples of rich teleologies of librarianship include Margaret Egan and Jesse Shera's social epistemology theory of librarianship and, more recently, Charles Osburn's theory of the librarians as stewards of the social transcript.
This study investigates definitional discourse that has occurred in times of crisis, when librarians are compelled to set the appropriate limits of their professional practice in light of larger events. Crises amplify the urgency of discourse, and having a problem to solve creates a situation where discourse can become an informal dialectic. A dialectic is a formal approach in Greek philosophy for generating understanding. Two or more disputants offer rival positions, and through repeated exchanges of justification seek reconciliation. The modern dialectical approach is often associated with the work of G. W. F. Hegel and Johann Fichte and can be summarized as thesis-antithesis-synthesis. In this case, the process of constructing the dialectic is informal, meaning the participants did not actively seek synthesis. Instead, the use of dialectic is meant to capture the idea of a back and forth process, through which the profession's identity becomes progressively clearer.

Dialectics are useful for interpretation, because their back and forth nature is simpler to examine for patterns than a less specialized discourse. Any pattern in how librarians respond to crises will provide insight into the underlying work of the profession. This insight does not address, "why does librarianship exist," but rather, "in times of crisis, what work do librarians emphasize?" In the context of virtue ethics, "work" refers to the classical Greek concept of *ergon*, which captures the idea of a life's work, or overarching task. This study seeks the more concrete *ergon* instead of the abstract *teleology*. Christine M. Korsgaard argues that Aristotle provides a conceptual precedent for using the *ergon* as the foundation of a virtue ethics. She does this by discussing the role that virtue plays in determining function, noting:

Both Plato and Aristotle make a conceptual connection between *ergon* and *aretē*. An *aretē* is not merely one of a thing's good points; it is specifically a quality that makes a thing good at performing its function.

The thrust of her position is that contrary to some interpretations of Aristotle's functional argument, carrying out one's function merely competently is not sufficient to lead to a virtuous character. Rather to strive for greatness in one's function is the mechanism through which one

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41 A dialectic is a formal approach in Greek philosophy for generating understanding. Two or more disputants offer rival positions, and through repeated exchanges of justification seek reconciliation. The modern dialectical approach is often associated with the work of G. W. F. Hegel and Johann Fichte and can be summarized as thesis-antithesis-synthesis. In this case, the process of constructing the dialectic is informal, meaning the participants did not actively seek synthesis. Instead, the use of dialectic is meant to capture the idea of a back and forth process, through which the profession's identity becomes progressively clearer.


43 Ibid., 260.
becomes ethical. That role of the *ergon* is to give direction to that dedication to strive, thus providing a foundation.

Other methods besides hermeneutical phenomenology could be used to find this pattern and do so in ways more customary to library research. Hermeneutical phenomenology's advantage over other methods is its approach to inquiry. Instead of emphasizing the analysis or the deconstruction of text, this method promotes receptivity as a minimally invasive means of inquiry. Receptivity prioritizes the meaning people give to their own experiences, while recognizing that some interpretation is necessary in order for that meaning to be accessible to readers. All inquiry is invasive, but hermeneutical phenomenology takes steps to respect the subjectivity of its sources. Another benefit is that its output often comes in the form of an explanatory narrative. Narrative output is important because if the *ergon* is to be accepted as a meaningful source of authority for virtue ethics it must be communicated in a persuasive way. The persuasiveness of narrative rests in its capacity to transmit theme as well as events. The *ergon* emerges as a theme in how librarians resolve crises that call the profession's purpose into question. Narrative is particularly engaging and persuasive, according to researchers in narrative inquiry F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, because it represents a fundamental means of expressing human experience.44

An identity narrative approach is compatible with virtue ethics because both are concerned with the formation of character. Virtue ethics reframes the essential question of ethics, from "what actions am I obliged to take" to "what kind of person should I be?" This is an intimate question, which demands an invitation instead of a prescription. Hermeneutical phenomenology's technique for emplotting an identity narrative is ideal for generating this kind of invitation. Despite its name, hermeneutical phenomenology is a simple research method. It is

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44 Connelly and Clandinin, “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry,” 2.
a method of inquiry that seeks to help a researcher in one time and place understand the meanings people in other times and places gave to their experiences. One way it accomplishes this goal is by treating these experiences as if they were texts and posits that they can be analyzed as texts, complete with themes and structures.

One structure of particular interest is the identity narrative. An identity narrative is an account of how a character, real or fictional, comes to be differentiated from his or her environment and peers by acquiring stable, identifying traits. This compatibility in logic means that it will be possible to use the identity narrative in hermeneutical phenomenology to perform the same function as an ergon does in a teleology. The ergon is a stable trait that captures a person's unique work. An identity narrative is a stable trait, reflected in decisions made in important events, providing an explanation for the historical trajectory of an institution. The only difference is that instead of positing that stable trait as a function of librarianship's metaphysical properties, it is the function of discursive reflection made by librarians about the work of their profession.

Review of the Literature

Introducing a new approach into an existing corpus of professional ethics would require a significant investment and requires correspondingly strong justification. In some ways, introducing a new approach to ethics requires less justification than modifying an existing value or ethic. The statements of professional ethics and core values of the American Library Association (ALA) provide the foundation for professional librarianship's mission in the United States. Those official statements represent an investment of years of discourse on the most fruitful ways to serve patrons, communities, society, and fellow library employees. Modifying an existing ethic would represent an attempt to change that character and would presume an authority greater than that collective wisdom. Introducing a virtue ethics approach does neither.
Instead, it suggests that there might be another way to think about ethics, which can lead to seeing existing values in a new light. The justification for incorporating a new approach rests on identifying some facet of professional activity that is insufficiently supported by existing ethical systems. The facet this study has identified is the need to strengthen librarians’ sense of autonomy when called upon to justify the responsibility their profession has for society.

Due to the unique qualities of virtue ethics, this study covers subject matter associated with two broad categories in the literature of librarianship, theory and ethics. Both categories are subsets of an even broader category, the philosophy of librarianship. As many works in the philosophy of librarianship, the purpose of this study is to provide a kind of conceptual structure for understanding the work of librarians. As does scientific research, philosophy comes in two types, basic and applied. Basic research in the philosophy of librarianship is exploratory, proposing theories of why librarianship exists or what purpose it serves. Applied philosophies pose questions about the nature of librarianship in order to solve a particular problem. This study falls into the latter category. It concerns itself with how to foster greater autonomy for librarians by elevating a theory of librarianship to the status of ethic. In that regard, the place in the literature where this study operates is among other works with a similar emphasis on the need to foster greater autonomy for the library profession. Two recent works that fall into this category are John M. Budd's *Self-Examination: The Present and Future of Librarianship* and John Buschman's *Dismantling the Public Sphere: Situating and Sustaining Librarianship in the...*

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46 Examples of applied philosophies of librarianship include Brenda Dervin's theory of "sensemaking" and Carol Kuhlthau's theory of "information seeking behavior."
Age of the New Public Philosophy. This study builds on arguments made in these two works and seeks to address questions raised in both.

In *Self-Examination*, Budd analyzes the state of the library profession. In doing so, he claims that the library profession is in danger of letting external technological, economic, and political visions set its agenda. Budd asserts that if librarians are to ensure that the profession remains representative of traditional ethics and values, they need to invest in developing a monistic teleology of librarianship. What he means is that librarianship needs a theory of the profession that addresses both ends and means, recognizing that libraries operate within and serve communities. Budd advocates finding a monistic teleology using a process he refers to as dialectical phenomenology because this kind of self-knowledge can help librarians set their own agenda and develop ethical *phronēsis*. *Phronēsis*, the capacity to know what actions to take in order to achieve the best outcomes, is an ethical trait. Budd did not attempt to identify the monistic teleology or to describe how to achieve *phronēsis*; rather, he left both tasks to be determined by the profession itself.

In *Dismantling the Public Sphere*, John Buschman wrote about how neo-liberalism is replacing ethical measures of worth with economical measures. He argues that this process is leading to the commodification of the public good, including the good provided by librarianship, because libraries operate for the general welfare of a society. Therein, Buschman posits that libraries are tangible manifestations of rational discourse and, as such, are visible extensions of

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48 Ibid., 245.

49 *Phronēsis* is the Greek concept of practical wisdom, or prudence. It is a method of developing an ethical character through habitually engaging in virtuous acts. A person who has achieved *phronēsis* has a mature character and may be trusted to pursue his or her purpose.

50 Buschman, *Dismantling the Public Sphere*, 132.
the public sphere. Public sphere theory originates with the work of philosopher Jürgen Habermas. The public sphere is the conceptual arena wherein discourse, rational or otherwise, informs opinion on matters of public concern. As society has moved toward commodifying information access, it has complicated the reality of open discourse. Libraries have traditionally been places that protect free access to information, but that tradition has not always been valued. In Buschman's assessment, no gathering of information sources, no matter how well organized, necessarily makes a library a manifestation of rational discourse. Rather, the ethics and values of librarians lead the transformation of a collection into a tool for the public good. Unchecked commodification threatens to produce a mindset that the social, cultural, and civic benefits provided by librarians to their communities are no longer worth the cost. Should that happen, he argues, discourse in society, along with quality of life, will be worse for it. Buschman asserts that the profession can defend against that process by identifying the good society receives from librarianship, instead of from the collection alone, and prioritizing that good in pedagogy, scholarship, and praxis. He places particular emphasis on the need to prioritize librarianship's capacity to support democracy.

These two works express many of the themes underpinning this study. They share a fundamental concern for librarianship's autonomy. For Buschman the main concern is ideologically inspired efforts to reduce or to eliminate government funding for public goods. Budd's concerns are more far ranging and include the role of new information technologies in shaping expectations of on library services. Both works concentrate on libraries as institutions

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51 Ibid., 101.; ibid., 170.
52 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.
53 Buschman, *Dismantling the Public Sphere*, 74.
54 Ibid., 178.
embedded in the communities they serve. Buschman advocates emphasizing that libraries manifest the public sphere to communities. Budd emphasizes that his teleological understanding of librarianship had to accommodate libraries as place. In both, the solution to promoting autonomy requires investigating some facet of librarianship's purpose. Buschman's approach gains a deeper understanding of the profession's role in reasoned discourse and the democratic process. For Budd, knowledge of librarianship is both means and ends. The two works differ in their solution, but both of these solutions find expression in this study. Budd supports the use of the dialectic process and suggests that phenomenology could be an effective bridge between humanistic and social science perspectives on librarianship. He also introduces phronēsis as the mechanism for securing autonomy. Phronēsis, practical wisdom, is a core concept in virtue ethics. Developing phronēsis is the essential goal of following virtue ethics. If one has achieved phronēsis, then one's decisions will all be oriented towards fulfilling one's purpose. Budd did not call for the development of a virtue ethic of librarianship, but in calling for a teleological understanding that might lead to phronēsis, he certainly opened the door for it. Buschman's solution was to create a narrative about the value of the profession. Narrative gives direction, a sense of purpose, and promotes coordinated action.

The desire to strengthen the autonomy of librarians is not a new pursuit. One of the reasons to be a profession instead of an occupation is to increase autonomy. Having a theory that combines subject expertise with occupational practice is a requirement of being a profession. Mary Eileen Ahern provides an early example of developing a theory in order to promote

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55 Practicing virtue ethics involves developing the self-discipline needed to act consistently in accord with one's purpose. Phronēsis is achieved when one practices this self-discipline long enough that it becomes part of one's character. This shaping of character is the goal of virtue ethics.

56 Buschman, Dismantling the Public Sphere, vii.
autonomy. Ahern promoted the autonomy of the profession by expressing librarianship's purpose not in terms of using a skill set but in the goal of promoting of social betterment. She said, "There is only one solution of all social problems, an increase in intelligence, a gradual education of the people. […] As a factor for happiness, order, and prosperity in the community consider the public library."57 As editor of Public Libraries, Ahern was able to spread her optimistic vision for librarianship to early generations of librarians, especially women.58 Librarianship, in Ahern's vision, was the profession dedicated to increasing people's happiness and reducing their suffering. Education was the best vehicle for achieving these outcomes, and maximizing access to reading, especially books for all stages in life, was the ideal way to fuel that vehicle.

Developing a theory of librarianship could also promote autonomy in library education and administration. While working for the Carnegie Corporation, Charles C. Williamson wrote the volumes collectively known as The Williamson Reports. These reports commented on the state of education for librarianship and set guidelines for what a professional education for librarianship should entail. Williamson wrote that library theory was useful in creating a new way of thinking about administering a library effectively. He claimed:

We may bring in the psychologist to study a library problem, but he is merely a psychologist, and so the sociologist, the statistician, the engineer, and the bibliographer. The scientifically trained librarian is all and none of these. Their attitudes, their skills, and their points of view are fused and unified in him into a new product.59


What changed was that the librarian's exposure to professional training created a new way of seeing the world and solving problems. Introducing theory to library education increased librarian autonomy by creating a perspective that was unique to librarians.

Another early perspective on theory came from Pierce Butler, author of *An Introduction to Library Science* the first comprehensive textbook for graduate education in librarianship. In his textbook, Butler wrote a section on practical considerations, many of which center around the need for a theory of librarianship. Butler’s most telling line was that, "A professional philosophy would give to librarianship that directness of action which can spring only from a complete consciousness of purpose." 60 Theory solves the problem of knowledge of the appropriate domain of a profession and simultaneously provides a sense of ownership over that domain. This statement links knowledge of purpose with the ability to act decisively, both of which relate to autonomy.

A year after Butler released his text, theorist of librarianship J. Periam Danton published a now-classic appeal for a philosophy of librarianship. In his appeal Danton states, "The crux of the matter is that the librarian has thus far concerned himself almost exclusively with process, achievement, and the immediate objective, and has given little or no thought to function or to justifying that function." 61 Danton's concern over librarianship's emphasis on the immediate objective suggests that the profession derives too much of its direction from *praxis* and not enough from theory. Danton's appeal is one of the earliest expressions of concern over this attachment to pragmatism. Danton asks the profession's vision be extended beyond immediate

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61 Danton, “Plea for a Philosophy of Librarianship,” 533.
concerns and provide some substitute for the library faith that reading is a moral good.\textsuperscript{62} In Danton's estimation, theory provided the grounds for intellectual flourishing. The profession could not grow in expertise, expand in function, or support democracy more effectively without a grounding theory. Expertise alone, without theory, could not provide professional autonomy.

A goal for the current study is to enhance librarian autonomy through the normative efforts of virtue ethics. Is finding an \textit{ergon} necessary to achieve this outcome, or could there be an existing \textit{telos} of librarianship that would suffice as the ethical norm? The most celebrated theory of library \textit{telos} is social epistemology, developed in 1952, by Margaret Egan and Jesse Shera, who proposed a new theory of bibliography, a teleological theory of graphical communication.\textsuperscript{63} They posited that the purpose of information use, both within and between groups of scholars, was a fit topic for speculation:

Such a discipline is here denominated, for want of a more accurately descriptive term, "social epistemology," by which is meant the study of those processes by which society as a whole seeks to achieve a perceptive or understanding relation to the total environment-physical, psychological, and intellectual.\textsuperscript{64}

After Egan's death, Shera continued to develop the concept of social epistemology which he explained accordingly:

[Librarians] must know the cognitive system of the individual and the communication network of society, as well as the importance of that knowledge to both the individual and to society. Social epistemology would be a new discipline with a focus upon the production, flow, integration and consumption of all forms of communicated thought throughout the entire social fabric.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 549.

\textsuperscript{63} Egan and Shera, “Foundations of a Theory of Bibliography,” 126.

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 132.

\textsuperscript{65} Shera, “Toward a Theory of Librarianship and Information Science,” 97.
To arbitrate importance in communication between individuals and society is an expansive purpose for librarianship. Shera made the vast scope of this responsibility even plainer with the concluding statement of his *Documentation and the Organization of Knowledge*. After saying that in order to answer the pressing questions of librarianship, librarians must bring the expertise of many disciplines into their own worldview, he provided a key to understanding the core of his philosophy: "[I]n the largest sense the proper study of librarianship is man." This statement suggests an elegant and expansive theory of librarianship, which would explain the place of librarianship in the world's intellectual traditions. However, its expansiveness renders it difficult to summarize briefly or to communicate fully and harder still to synthesize into an ethical norm that would be more persuasive than the need to address immediate practical concerns.

Operating in parallel with the development of modern theories of librarianship were theories of documentation science. Documentation science was, as its name implies, a discipline tasked with the scientific organization of documents. Its origins are most closely associated with Paul Otlet and Henri La Fontaine initially, with Suzanne Briet given credit for greatly expanding its conceptual horizons. Documentation science was a document-centered approach to the organization of information. Michael Buckland noted that theorists understood the concept of document in a variety of ways. For example, Michele M. Tourney argues that Briet took the term document to mean any expression of evidence, famously writing that an antelope in a zoo was a document, while a wild antelope was not. Sarada R. Ranganathan, a legend in the field of library classification, had a much more conservative definition. He took document to mean only

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66 Shera, *Documentation and the Organization of Knowledge*, 177.


thought recorded on a physical medium that possessed the capacity to be handled, transported, and preserved. This excluded television recording and radio programs. Documentalists leader Frits Donker Duyvis may have had the most expansive definition. He did not limit the range of documents to material objects. Instead, it was any repository of expressed thought. The science of documentation was a modernistic attempt to bring scientific rigor to bibliographic control, regardless the scope of document's definition. Initially, documentation was a skill concentration within librarianship. Relating documentation to the classic bibliographic control systems of Melvil Dewey and Charles Ammi Cutter, Jesse Shera called this kind of systematic mastery of bibliographic technology "the heart of librarianship."

The theories of Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver introduced mathematical rigor to theories of information. Information scientist Bertram Brooks describes the rise of related disciplines of informatics, scientometrics, and bibliometrics in 1962, 1963, and 1969 respectively. Finally, information theorist Jean Tague-Sutcliffe gives an account of the origin of infometrics. Buckland notes that theories of information became more nuanced, including not just textual information but information as process and information-as-thing as well. This expansion of understanding of information fueled the growth of a discipline within librarianship called information science. It is not within the scope of this project to address this process in


70 Ibid., 806.


72 Shannon and Weaver, The Mathematical Theory of Communication, 1.


75 Buckland, “Information as Thing,” 359.
detail, but for background in the subject, Buckland and Liu produced an excellent survey of the
literature on the history of information science. Buckland also speculates on what factors
promoted the need for distinguishing between librarianship, documentation and information
science. Information science introduced a new discursive formulation to the profession. This
resulted in the creation of new terms, new concepts, and new modes of thinking about
information. This discursive formulation found application in the Information Society
movement, seen in the post-industrial thought of sociologist Daniel Bell. It also found
expression in library practice through the Library 2.0 trend. Theories of information science
provided the rigor to the discipline at a time when it was becoming increasingly important to
appear scientific in method. As the dominant means of valuing knowledge changed, an
information science approach became even more useful in satisfying the need for commodified
knowledge. The question remains if that approach, without the experience brought by the library
profession in supporting the health of society, will be an effective long term purpose for the
profession.

Many scholars have contributed to theories of the purpose or work of librarianship since
the formation of information science and since Egan and Shera's contributions. Some of the more
significant contributions include those of Pertti Vakkari, Douglas J. Foskett, André Cossette,
Brenda Dervin, Carol C. Kuhlthau, Michael Gorman, Birger Hjørland, Luciano Floridi, and R.
David Lankes. Each brought a unique perspective to understanding librarianship, and their work

77 Buckland, "Documentation, Information Science, and Library Science in the USA,” 63.
79 Bell, “The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society.”
could potentially serve as a norm. Most tend to focus on a narrow aspect of library practice and either are heavily interdisciplinary or are conceptually abstract. Of recent works on the purpose of librarianship, the most likely candidate for a normative theory is Charles B. Osburn's *The Social Transcript: Uncovering Library Philosophy*.

Osburn's material is also highly interdisciplinary and is rich with supportive material, but the core model behind his theory of librarianship is simple. Osburn's model is an evolutionary one.\(^1\) Any human activity that continues to exist generation after generation does so because it fulfills some biological need. Humans benefit from being able to access the experiences of people from other places and times in their efforts to solve problems. "Library" is the name given to the concept of optimizing access to those vicarious experiences. "Library" is a cultural technology, but also a social institution, tasked with making those experiences available to people who would benefit from them.\(^2\) Osburn's theory is evolutionary also in the sense that he recognized that cultures evolve over time. Not only do libraries record vicarious experiences, but also they archived how cultures valued those experiences. The library is a social institution that stewards the record of cultural evolution. Osburn adopted the term *social transcript* from economist and philosopher Kenneth Boulding to describe the product of cultural evolution.\(^3\) Osburn describes the way the social transcript conveys cultural evolution as analogous to the way memes work in the formation of memories and how genes work in the formation of the body, namely, as vehicles of both storage and transmission of information.\(^4\) Reminiscent of Shera's dipolar concept of librarianship as the point where mind meets society, Osburn views

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\(^1\) Osburn, 2009, 74.

\(^2\) Ibid., 253.

\(^3\) Ibid., xii.

\(^4\) Ibid., 264.
libraries as the technology that unites biological, cognitive, and social needs. This theory is as ambitious as Shera's, but unlike social epistemology, Osburn's theory uses adaptation to explain why societies need libraries, and then builds a theory of library function from that need.\textsuperscript{85}

I gave serious consideration to using social transcript theory as the teleological basis for a virtue ethic. However, it seems that social transcript theory explains why people need libraries, not why they need librarians. It is possible to conceive of a time when automated systems provided by intellectual property owners are able to fulfill the basic information organization and retrieval functions of librarians, possibly more conveniently for the user. It is also possible that users will begin to regard the Internet and social information platforms as more essential for democracy than libraries. In that scenario, it is not unreasonable to think that if different technologies are able to perform the gross functions of the profession, then the subtle ones might be without a cost-effective justification. In this scenario, people could still be a part of the information delivery process, but the jobs they perform could be substantially different from that of the contemporary librarian. Whether one sees this result as a good or bad thing depends on one's view of the value of the contemporary librarian. Herein, I assume that librarians provide a benefit to society beyond the value of their collections and that this value warrants steps to protect it. The question then becomes, how can those subtle functions, the ones that often resist commodification, be emphasized in a theory of librarianship?

This study considers virtue ethics as an approach to doing that. The key to understanding virtue ethics is that it is a character-based approach to ethics. The fact that virtue ethics operates on character means that it can be incorporated into existing professional ethics without having to replace deontological ethics, which focuses on fulfilling duties to the profession and society, or utilitarian approaches which focus on aiming for positive consequences. Virtue ethics operates

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 46.
through the development of a strong, ethical character. Having a strong character enables one to pursue the virtues that correspond with one’s reason for being and to avoid those vices that detract from it. Virtue is best understood in this context as excellence, rather than goodness. Virtues promote excellence in line with purpose. A virtuous life is one that flourishes, or experiences *eudaimonia*.86

It might be tempting to say that the objective of virtue ethics is to flourish, or to prosper, but that is not correct. The virtuous person is concerned with perfecting the virtues; flourishing might come as a result of being virtuous, but nothing is guaranteed. For this reason, virtue is its own reward. The classic Aristotelian formulation of this idea is that, "virtue makes the goal right."87 According to Jessica Moss, this means that character is prior to outcomes.88 Flourishing, or prosperity, is a particular concept of the good, *eudaimonia*. The person with the wisdom to flourish is a *phronimos*, someone who has achieved *phronēsis*. In the original Aristotelian conception, the *phronimos* possess practical moral wisdom and serve the interests of the *polis*, the dominant social community, by being able to act directly with regard to the good.89 To possess *phronēsis* is to have a well-formed character, someone for whom the virtues are now second nature.

The type of virtue ethics being considered for a professional ethic is not Aristotle's virtue ethics but a revival and adaptation of it. The virtue ethics revival began, in 1958, when analytical philosopher G. Elizabeth M. Anscombe published her critique, "Modern Moral Philosophy." Anscombe did not advocate the adoption of Aristotelian virtue theory as a solution to modern

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86 Ibid., 4. *Eudaimonia* is Greek for happiness or prosperity.


88 Moss, “Virtue Makes the Goal Right.” 205.

ethical problems, but she did use it to demonstrate that ethical approaches are dependent upon cultures for their parameters and are subject to change as any other facet of intellectual history. Rosalind Hursthouse made it clear that modern virtue ethicists are as free from adhering to the main corpus of Aristotle's moral views, as deontologists are from strict Kantianism. Major figures in the field include Hans-Georg Gadamer, who translated Aristotle's main work of the subject of virtue ethics and gave it a phenomenological treatment; Alasdair MacIntyre, whose books After Virtue and Dependent Rational Animals: Why Humans Need the Virtues are classics in the field; Phillippa Foot, whose Virtues and Vices framed the modern movement. If librarianship does consider incorporating virtue ethics into its professional ethics, it will not be the first profession to do so.

Strong arguments against the viability of virtue ethics as a third approach exist. Ethicist Gilbert Harman argues that it perpetuates, with potentially serious consequences, the "attribution error," that most ethical lapses are due to bad traits instead of bad decisions. It is also culturally and temporally relative, with different cultures producing different virtues across time. Whether this is a strength or a weakness depends on the extent the one considers immutability to be important. Robert Johnson has argued that self-improvement is an example of a right action taken by a non-virtuous person. Using the example of the person who struggles with temperance, he posits that non-virtuous people might actually improve themselves more effectively if they do

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90 This is important because Aristotelian causal theory is no longer considered persuasive. Also, Aristotle's views on good society include a restricted view of the role of woman and a positive regard for slavery. Being able to parse out culturally difficult aspects of Aristotle's thought allows for broader consideration of virtue ethics Refer to Hursthouse, On Virtue Ethics, 2.

91 Scholars in nursing, the legal profession, social work, psychology, and epidemiology have all considered the value of virtue ethics in their practices. Key examples of these include Armstrong's "Towards a Strong Virtue Ethics for Nursing Practice"; Oakley and Cocking's Virtue Ethics and Professional Roles, McBeath and Webb's "Virtue Ethics and Social Work"; Jordan and Meara's "Ethics and the Professional Practice of Psychologists"; and Weed and McKeown's "Epidemiology and Virtue Ethics."

not model virtuous people. If that person acts in the same way that a person with temperance does, the result is likely to be a failure of restraint.\textsuperscript{93}

Ethical theorist Robert Louden identified several of what he called virtue ethics' vices, including how the emphasis on agents banishes concern over wrong action, a concept useful for theories of justice. Nor does it provide a clear way to determine who is virtuous beyond the seemingly imprecise flourishing test. It promotes appearances over the idea of an actual concept of good. Finally, it relies too strongly on the Aristotelian mystique and encourages utopianism.\textsuperscript{94}

Notable defenses of virtue ethics exist, particularly Alasdair McIntyre's \textit{Dependent Rational Animals}, Sean McAleer's “Four Solutions to the Alleged Incompleteness of Virtue Ethics,” and Christine Korsgaard's “Aristotle on Function and Virtue.” For the purposes of this project, however, it is more important that virtue ethics be able to generate a sense of autonomy for librarians than to stand alone as an unchallenged alternative to modern moral theory. All ethical systems have flaws; for example, in order to function, deontology requires assent to moral universalism, and consequentialism requires assent to an arbitrary standard for positive outcomes. Despite their flaws, ethical systems are still useful as long as they serve their purpose, to guide human beings through decision-making processes systematically and consistently. Virtue ethics for librarianship would promote autonomy by systematically putting the profession’s purpose at the center of the decision making process. Ultimately, the reason for appealing to virtue ethics and these neo-Aristotelian concepts is not that they are novel, but that they provide an additional tool for reconciling the two identities in the discipline towards a single function, character, and idea of professional flourishing.

\textsuperscript{93} Johnson, “Virtue and Right.”

Methodology

Even though this study relies on a virtue theory framework, the method used to find the ergon of librarianship is hermeneutical phenomenology. Despite the similarity in name, Suzann M. Laverty makes a clear distinction between hermeneutical phenomenology and phenomenological research in epistemology, ontology, and methodology accordingly: The purpose of phenomenology is to justify epistemological assessments about experiences, while hermeneutical phenomenology is a search for the meaning of experiences. 95 Hermeneutics is the philosophical study of the problem of meaning. It was originally an approach to interpreting the meaning of historical texts, traditionally religious texts. The tool used to accomplish this was the "hermeneutic circle," wherein parts of a text were compared to the whole and then again to the parts cyclically as a means of bringing insight into the text and drawing out meaning.

According to philosopher of mind David Woodruff Smith, the domain of hermeneutics radically changed with the publication of Being and Time.96 In it, Martin Heidegger reconceived hermeneutics as an analysis of meaning in all human experiences, particularly in historical cultural questions.97 Heidegger's approach is a disposition towards existence that is temporal and physical. All revelations require an interpretation to place them in lived experience. In this way, the hermeneutic circle was changed from being a tool of textual analysis to one of self-creation of our understanding of the world.

Two philosophers, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, refined Heidegger's perspective on hermeneutics in ways that are important for this study. Gadamer's most important work, and the source of his hermeneutical argument, is Truth and Method. In a 1977 essay


96 Smith, "Phenomenology."

97 Heidegger, Being and Time, 33.
published with a colleague, Gadamer emphasized the need to recognize that scientific
investigation begins with the personhood of the researcher. Gadamer claims that people know
the world through indoctrination into a language. Since language arbitrates all experiences, he
argues, it is impossible for a researcher to understand the meaning expressed by a person from
another time by direct analysis of the text. This condition of isolation from the other is "the
horizon." In 2006, Gadamer explained that to compensate, one assumes an open disposition, a
receptivity to the otherness of this horizon. The result is a "fusion of horizons," where the
researcher's perspective and that of the person, text, or art object being researched combine to
make a new understanding. For this study, Gadamer's gentle tool provides not just a method, but
a mindset.

Paul Ricoeur also strongly influences this project's methodological approach. Ricoeur's
main philosophical project was the search for a philosophical anthropology, an explanation for
agency. Ricoeur did his most significant work in this area within the multi-volume Time and
Narrative, Oneself as Another and in From Text to Action. Ricoeur's anthropology expresses the
idea that there is no such thing as a pure act, one not interpreted through symbolic-linguistic
interpretation. In his work, From Text to Action, he emphasizes that meaningful human action
is inherently discursive. By conceiving of life as text, the same tools used to analyze texts
could analyze agents in the world. The most powerful tool for Ricoeur, and the one most relevant
to this project, is narrative. A narrative is a discrete account with a beginning, middle, and end
with definite actors, occurring in place across a span of time.

100 Ricoeur, From Text to Action, 15.
101 Ibid., 147.
In a 1991 study, philosopher of hermeneutics Anthony Paul Kerby defines a narrative as a series of discrete acts, occurring contingently, arranged together in a process called emplotment.\textsuperscript{102} Bernard Dauenhauer and David Pellauer, in their discussion of Ricoeur, explain that identity narratives are a specific type of narrative; identity narratives use a story to create a character.\textsuperscript{103} Once formed, an identity narrative is self-consistent in the retelling, a quality making it a useful analogue to the \textit{ergon}. The critical aspect of Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology is that there is no single right way to read a text. An interpretation of a text is meaningful if it is experienced as having meaning. The identity narratives that form are meaningful because something about them resonates with our lived experiences. In this way, this project to find an \textit{ergon} is a project to find a meaningful narrative about librarianship that resonates sufficiently well to serve as the norm for a virtue ethic. If the narrative this study uncovers is does not resonate to that degree, then the next step would be to construct another narrative, rather than discard the method.

For the source of this narrative, the three events I have examined are the resolution of the fiction question in the late 19th century, librarianship's nationalistic mobilization during World War I, and the struggle between supporters of the “Library Bill of Rights” and social responsibility in the 1960s and early 1970s. Each of these events represents a moment in the history of the profession when dramatic circumstances compelled librarians to define the nature of their relationship with some facet of civilization. The fiction question was the choice librarianship had to make over whether its purpose was to elevate the population by providing access to high culture and technical resources, or whether its job was to help stabilize communities that were experiencing economic hardships and social upheavals by providing

\textsuperscript{102} Kerby, \textit{Narrative and the Self}, 125.

\textsuperscript{103} Dauenhauer and Pellauer, “Paul Ricoeur.”
entertaining but culturally scandalous materials into the collection. The question of nationalism during World War I was over what role librarians had in promoting the war effort. Along with efforts to extend access of reading material to soldiers, some librarians also removed materials from their collection that painted "enemies" of the United States in a positive light. This crisis began to define the relationship between librarians and the state. The contest between supporters of the “Library Bill of Rights” and the social responsibility movement centered around the question of library neutrality. Is it more in keeping with the purpose of the library to center on keeping information free and unbiased, or is it more important to use information to improve the social conditions so that more people can make use of information? This resolution further defined the good of the profession and clarified the relationship between librarianship and society. These three crises are a good sample of narrative acts because they each dealt with the purpose of the library profession in light of the community, and in the reconciliation of contrasting worldviews, each rose to the level of a dialectic of self-understanding. Finding any pattern in this reconciliation suggests a shared character of librarianship.

Structure of the Study

The remainder of the study addresses the process through which the information science and librarianship narratives in the profession can be reconciled in a way that strengthens the autonomy of the profession and promotes the health of society. Chapter 2 discusses how virtue ethics possesses qualities that make it uniquely suited for reconciling differences in the narratives of the library profession. Chapter 3 explains why the use of traditional neo-Aristotelian metaphysics to uncover librarianship's function is not persuasive to the modern reader, and makes the case for using librarianship's identity narrative as an analogue for its ergon, and that hermeneutical phenomenology is the best approach for uncovering that identity narrative. Chapter 4 presents the actual hermeneutic phenomenological conversation with the three
historical crises in American librarianship, the identification of three themes that emerge from this conversation and the process of emplotting these into what I propose is the profession's identity narrative. Chapter 5 considers how the identity narrative can be used as the first step in developing a system of professional virtue ethics for librarianship and revisits the question of library autonomy and the reconciliation of the discipline's two identities.

104 In this study I use both hermeneutical phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenological as technical terms. Hermeneutical phenomenology is the term used to describe the philosophical discipline and hermeneutic phenomenological is used when hermeneutical phenomenology is applied as a method.
CHAPTER 2
PROFESSIONAL VIRTUE ETHICS

This chapter develops a three-part argument for using virtue ethics as the foundation for establishing the professional ethics of librarianship. Part one provides an explanation of what virtue ethics is and how it differs from others forms of ethics. This explanation also provides a useful frame for the overall argument, since the meanings of many terms used in virtue ethics require not only explanation, but also interpretation, as their meanings and significance are still matters of debate among ethicists. Part two demonstrates how virtue ethics is being employed by members of other professions. While every profession's ethical requirements are unique, the efforts of other professions to incorporate virtue ethics into their professional codes provide useful insight into how librarians might employ the system in their profession. Part three discusses a model of how virtue ethics would function in a variety of the roles librarians occupy, particularly administration and user and technical services within public, academic, school, and special libraries. By arguing that virtue ethics is a viable ethical system, that a precedent exists for considering it, and that it maps well onto librarian practice, I aim to establish my case for incorporating virtue into existing ethics of librarianship.

1 This part is necessary because, despite its revival among ethicists, virtue ethics is still not as widely known as other forms of ethics. For subsequent reference, let me provide here a note on the convention I use for numbering the word “ethics” throughout. “Virtue ethics” is a singular noun when referring to it as a system of ethics. The term is a plural noun when referring to the applied ethics of a profession. For example, virtue ethics is a character-based ethical system, and the professional ethics of librarianship are drawn from their narrative identity.
Defining Virtue Ethics

A system of virtue ethics differs from other normative forms of ethics in ways that make it particularly well-suited for promoting professional autonomy. To understand these differences, it is necessary to establish the current baseline in library professional ethics. This baseline is comprised of deontological ethics and consequential ethics.

Deontological ethics concerns the moral duties or actions of human agents. In the traditional Kantian formation of deontology, an agent uses reason to determine what constitutes right and wrong action. For example, stealing is wrong because it violates the concept of property; similarly, murder is wrong because it destroys the agency of other humans. This designation of being universally right or wrong creates a categorical imperative: if an act is wrong, one has the duty or imperative to avoid that wrong universally, or categorically. An agent must rely on his or her own judgment to determine what is right or wrong and is held morally responsible for both the means and ends used in relation to an action. As an agent-centered ethical system, deontology recognizes human agency as being an essential pre-condition for moral action. Other agents are never to be treated as the means to accomplish an end. In exchange for recognizing the moral autonomy of other agents, others are held to the standards of their own categorical imperatives. The assumption is that since categorical imperatives are derived from reasoned principles, they create a shared ethical basis, a system of reciprocal moral culpability through which to judge the rightness or wrongness of actions.

The professional ethics of librarianship tend to employ the contractarian variant of deontology, wherein instead of using the judgment of a single agent, the profession uses a shared professional binding agreement of what constitutes right and wrong action. The “Library Bill of

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2 Because deontology derives its ethical system from the perspective of human agents, what is moral depends on the agent, and the consequences for acting with bad intent is personal moral culpability.
Rights," the “Code of Ethics of the American Library Association,” and the “Freedom to Read Statement" all reflect group efforts to reach accords on standards for ethically right action. The “Library Bill of Rights” establishes six basic policies for librarians to follow. Each of those policies focuses on an action and contains the word "should," as in should provide, should challenge, and should cooperate. Deontology provides an act-centric, moral, and duty-based approach to the ethics of librarianship. Ultimately, even though those standards for right action are thoughtful and reasonable, one must submit to them in order to carry out one's duty. Virtue ethics does not require submission of this kind; rather, it places responsibility for ethical reasoning on the individual and begins the professional ethics formation process from a position of autonomy.

The second normative system of ethics used as a baseline for the professional ethics of librarianship is consequentialism. Consequentialism is the theory that morality is determined by examining real or imagined consequences of actions and appraising how those consequences affect human welfare. Welfare is measured against a standard or standards of the good, with pleasure being the traditional standard in the utilitarian version of consequentialism. Practicing consequentialism begins with the premise that all actions are permissible unless they would cause harm to others. Beyond that, it becomes morally good for a person to seek to act in ways that maximize welfare.

There are many forms of consequentialism, each defined by what counts as welfare, as an action, or as a consequence. The kind of consequentialism that seems to be associated with librarianship's professional ethics is rule consequentialism. Brad Hooker, a moral philosopher, defines rule-consequentialism as a form of indirect consequentialism that establishes that the best

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3 American Library Association, “Library Bill of Rights.”
way to promote welfare is through enacting socially agreed upon rules of conduct, such as justice or fairness.⁴ In this way, not just obeying but also promoting these rules becomes the standard for morally good action. It seems that rule consequentialism is at work in the “Core Values of Librarianship” document, which establishes eleven values that librarians should promote including democracy, continuing education, diversity, and the public good.⁵

Deontology and consequentialism each include the idea of the moral transgression, either as a breach of one's ethical duty or in causing harm through action or inaction that runs contrary to human welfare. Even though consequentialism is based on promoting welfare, it seems to be easier to administer a policy of minimizing specific transgressions than one of maximizing welfare. Virtue ethics makes it more difficult to give into the easier approach because the only real transgression in virtue ethics is *akrasia*, allowing oneself to act against one's best interests.

Virtue theory relies upon an attraction to being moral, rather than upon the avoidance of transgression. Philosopher of intelligence Jarek Gryz points out that there is no categorical imperative for virtue ethics.⁶ The morality of an action is not judged by its consequences, which are often unknowable at the time of action; instead, the actor is judged by whether he or she has developed the kind of character needed to make sound ethical decisions. That character is expected to engage, out of a habitual desire to be good, in virtuous actions. The only person one can transgress against while adhering to virtue ethics is one's self, by failing to pursue excellence in fulfilling one's purpose.

⁵ American Library Association, “Core Values of Librarianship.”
Stephen Gardiner identifies virtue ethics as an approach to ethics that is both old and new. He notes that its roots are in classical Greek philosophy, particularly in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Eudaimonic Ethics*, core ethical works of Aristotle. Yet, it also quite new, as its revival began with the publication, in 1958, of G. Elizabeth M. Anscombe's paper, "Modern Moral Philosophy." This dual nature of virtue ethics is perhaps what makes it challenging to grasp and explains why it is not more widely adopted. It is classical in its language and rationale, but it is invested in resolving contemporary ethical questions. This approach differs in mindset from forms of ethics formulated after the Enlightenment to such an extent that it is first necessary to define the key terms.

On the matter of what type of approach virtue ethics is, Rosalind Hursthouse, one of the thought leaders on modern virtue ethics, argues that virtue ethics is a normative ethical system. As is characteristic of normative ethics, virtue ethics makes propositions about the best way to live. To support these propositions, each system of normative ethics relies on a different metaphysical claim about the nature of the world. In the case of neo-Aristotelian approaches to virtue ethics, Gregory Trianosky identifies this claim is a non-moral teleological claim, where teleology is the philosophical study of purposes. The claim that virtue ethics is teleological means that living the good life is somehow dependent upon fulfilling one's purpose. According to moral philosopher Christine M. Korsgaard, this assertion is known as Aristotle's functional

7 Gardiner, “Virtue Ethics, Here and Now,” 1.
8 Hursthouse, “Normative Virtue Ethics,” 17.
9 Normative ethics is a major class of ethics, distinct from meta-ethics and practical ethics. Professional ethics are an example of a practical ethics; thus, one of the things this study aims to demonstrate is that it is possible for a normative ethic to be used in a practical context.
argument and is central to any analysis of virtue ethics.11 Trianosky further points out that this is a non-moral claim; that is, there is nothing inherently good or bad about that purpose -- it simply is one's goal in life.12 This fulfilling of purpose is not something one accomplishes through contemplation alone but through action. Within the virtue ethics perspective being ethical is a capacity that one can hone as one would hone a skill. In order to be an expert at a skill one must be dedicated to its practice. Even the strong desire to be ethical cannot master the art of living well without engaging in the practice of ethical formation. Understanding how practicing virtue ethics aids the formation process requires knowledge of the central Greek concepts in virtue ethics, specifically *ethos, hexis, ergon, phronēsis, aretē,* and *eudaimonia.* While the origin of these terms predates Aristotle, his use of them has been most influential on virtue ethics orthodoxy. Thus, it is important to establish what he means with these terms before it is reasonable to consider modern variations. The next few sections define and explain the significance of each of these concepts in order to provide a broader understanding of what a system of virtue ethics is and how it functions.

*Ethos and Hexis*

When one works to improve one's ethical capacity, the instrument that is honed is one's *ethos* or character. A convenient way to think of character is as the sum of a lifetime of difficult decisions. The development of a strong, ethical character is not a passive endeavor and does not form by mindless habit. It is one's accustomed way of responding to events, a continuity of agency. Julia Annas, a virtue ethicist, uses the literary example of Charles Dickens' character


Ebenezer Scrooge to demonstrate how character works.\textsuperscript{13} Scrooge had an epiphany that there was a better way to live, but the full transformation of his character required habituation and experience. As Annas describes it, "he continued over time the process of becoming a compassionate person."\textsuperscript{14} Philosopher of applied ethics Gianluca Di Muzio supports Annas' position that change is possible for the person of poor character. He notes that scholars of Aristotle's work disagree over whether it is possible for a person of poor character to improve.\textsuperscript{15} Di Muzio then set out to make the case that character is voluntary, even for the person whose character has degraded. He notes how in the \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} 1114a14-15 Aristotle compares the person of questionable character with a person who has made him or herself ill.\textsuperscript{16} No outside force will cure a questionable character; the cure must come from within. Wishing alone will not change character, instead it requires devotion to change, just as a person who has made him or herself ill must develop good habits that will lead to a healthy outcome. This question of can a person of poor character change in important because if librarianship's crisis in autonomy is similar in kind of a defect of character, knowing that it is possible to improve character gives reassurance that developing a system of professional virtue ethics is something worth pursuing.

Transforming one's character for the better requires one to operate out of a certain disposition or \textit{hexis}. Richard Kraut, a philosopher of politics and morality, explains that \textit{hexis}

\textsuperscript{13} The literary reference here is to Charles Dickens, \textit{A Christmas Carol}.
\textsuperscript{14} Annas, \textit{Intelligent Virtue}, 12.
\textsuperscript{15} Di Muzio, “Aristotle on Improving One’s Character,” 205.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 208.
means a stable condition of mind or body that one must work to develop.\textsuperscript{17} An example of a bodily state of \textit{hexis} is health. Good health requires a balanced diet, regular exercise, and prompt medical attention when required. None of those things happens on its own; instead, each requires a decision to be healthy along with the dedication to follow through with that decision. Once one has established the discipline to be healthy, that discipline tends to be stable. The equivalent mental state of \textit{hexis} is self-possession. Self-possession is a disposition of being collected or in control. A person who is self-possessed is not necessarily calm because strong feeling or \textit{pathos} is sometimes the appropriate response when challenges arise. Even when exhibiting strong feelings, a person who is self-possessed acts deliberately and with intent. This requirement reveals something important about the rationale of virtue ethics. Developing an ethical character is not something that one is compelled to do. It is a choice and requires a commitment to the development of a serious disposition towards improvement. A person who chooses not to hone his or her ethical instrument still develops a character, but it is an appetitive character, dominated by choices governed by base, bodily concerns. Since developing a strong ethical character is not a product of the emotional desire to be ethical and instead is a dedication to making prudent decisions, on what does one base the prudence of a decision?\textsuperscript{18} The answer to that is the next important term, the \textit{ergon}.

\textsuperscript{17} Kraut, “Aristotle's Ethics,” sec. 5.1.

\textsuperscript{18} The use of the term prudence suggests rational, measured decision-making. The term often is translated as “practical wisdom,” which carries the valuative force of both pragmatism and wisdom. At this point, though, it is important to remember that the more directly moral language of good or bad decisions is inappropriate, since the standard for good or bad has yet to be established.
Ergon

Ergon means task or work, and it carries with it the connotations of something's function. Kathleen V. Wilkes, philosopher of mind, characterizes it this way, "The ergon of any X is the function that it has; or, if it is the kind of this which cannot readily be said to have a function, it is its characteristic activity."\(^{19}\) Aristotle emphasizes that someone's function was where his or her happiness resides.\(^{20}\) The full importance of this is made clear below in the discussion of eudaimonia; for now, it opens up the relationship between function, practical wisdom, and happiness. As happiness is the goal of life and fulfilling one's function promotes happiness, then practical wisdom about how best to fulfill that function is valuable to pursue. Anything that obviously promotes one's purpose is wise to pursue while anything that does not obviously promote it is unwise to pursue. However, many actions may not obviously fall into either category, and from the perspective of neo-Aristotelian versions of virtue ethics it is through devoting oneself to rational, deliberate action that one gains the ability to determine the prudence of those actions.

Aristotle posits that humanity has an ergon, and he derives it by considering what faculty is unique to humans. Put another way, to find the ergon, the philosopher should consider all of the activities humans perform and decide which one is the most responsible for our classification as human.\(^{21}\) His conclusion is interpreted differently by two schools of thought: exclusionists and inclusivists. Matthew Walker, a philosopher working in classical Greek ethics, states that the exclusionist school interprets the ergon of humanity to be a life of active engagement with

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\(^{21}\) Ibid., X 7 1177a12–13.
theoretical wisdom or *sophia*. In other words, from the exclusionist interpretation, the *ergon* of humanity is being a philosopher. Walker also summarizes a variety of inclusivist readings before offering up his own. He argues that wisdom is the highest good, but the most characteristic human activity is the act of trying to live the good life. The act of trying to live the good live is characterized by a complex and ongoing decision-making process that includes both practical wisdom or *phronēsis* and emotion. Herein, I operate from Walker's inclusivist perspective; it is appropriate to think of the highest and most characteristic human activity, of the species or an individual, as the dedication to improvement or character by any beneficial quality or method.

*Phronēsis*

*Phronēsis* is one of two intellectual virtues that Aristotle argues is essential for a strong, ethical character, the other being *sophia*. If *sophia* is theoretical wisdom, *phronēsis* is the practical faculty that applies wisdom to making decisions. The marker of having developed *phronēsis* is mastery over *akrasia*, the self-harmful tendency to act against one's best interests. Jana Noel points out that *phronēsis* may be translated in a variety of ways, including practical wisdom, practical reasoning, moral discernment, moral insight, and prudence. She notes that some of these translations focus on the role of reason, some on new kinds of perception, and others on ethical character. Each of these is an important component of *phronēsis*, but none of these attributes alone fully captures it. Rather than knowing what is ethical, a better

23 Ibid., 108.
understanding of what *phronēsis* means is knowing how best to act ethically and being inclined to do so.

The dedication to put this knowledge into practice is a moral form of *hexis*, a stable disposition for the active, rational pursuit of ethical betterment. Like bodily health, *phronēsis* is something one chooses to nurture, sustains with a serious disposition, and is self-perpetuating when attained. *Phronēsis* is cultivated by first deliberating about the ethical considerations of a decision, then taking the best action possible. Neither action without deliberation nor deliberation without action is useful for forming *phronēsis*. During the early formation process, when the decisions are likely to be wrong, engaging in deliberation is more important than making the right decisions, so action must be taken without full confidence in the deliberative process. This gap in ethical expertise can sometimes be compensated for by observing and emulate someone who already has *phronēsis*. Ultimately, as Annas points out, the value of *phronēsis* is that through it, one comes to a place of self-confidence where acting ethically is intuitive, allowing people to respond "directly and immediately" to ethical dilemmas.

*Aretē*

*Aretē* is the Greek word meaning virtue or excellence of character. It is for this reason that virtue ethics is alternately referred to as aretaiic ethics. According to Aristotle, humans have three basic components to their natures, *pathos* or feelings, *dunamis* or inborn capacity, and the

26 While the teleological foundation of virtue ethics is non-moral, the process of determining whom one should be is a moral process. Virtue ethics is a process of building up one's character in order to fulfill one's purpose. If one undertakes that commitment, then allows oneself to neglect that purpose then one is behaving immorally.


28 Annas, 27.
aforementioned *hexis*. After discounting a feeling or something inborn, Aristotle resolves that virtue must be a *hexis*. Since *phronēsis* is a virtue that is considered to be a *hexis*, this resolution is consistent. Therefore, a virtue refers to a series of intellectual and moral states that, if cultivated, promote a strong ethical character that is oriented towards building a good life. The decision to define character, work, and practical wisdom in this chapter before addressing virtue was deliberate. The decision emphasizes the fact that virtue ethics is not a proscriptive system. Practicing virtue ethics is not a matter of memorizing and consenting to a list of virtues. Instead, as I have argued, it involves a transformation of self so that one is attracted to states that are virtuous in light of one's function or purpose. This transformation involves knowing one's function, developing the disposition to form a good character, and dedication to ethical deliberation before action. Only when *phronēsis* begins to develop, can a person apply the other virtues to daily life. The reason for this is that, according to Aristotle, every moral virtue that was not universally good such as *sophia* resides between two vices or *ethikē kakia*. Classicist James Opie Urmson notes that these two vices represent excess and deficiencies of the virtue. For instance, the moral virtue of courage lies between foolhardiness and cowardice. This principle is called the doctrine of means. Aristotle's presents his virtue and vice set in the context of achieving humanity's ergon, which in general is a life of contemplative action. Since my present study is concerned with librarianship's ergon, not humanity's ergon, the virtues associated with it


30 Ibid., II.6 1106b.

31 Ibid., II.2 1104b.

doubtless are different. Still, for those virtues that are not obviously always good, the doctrine of the means helps guide thinking about what counts as virtuous for librarianship.

*Eudaimonia*

The last concept that bears further explanation is *eudaimonia*, which means happiness through growth of well-being or prosperity. Sometimes the term is translated as flourishing. If contemplative action is the *ergon* of humanity, then the reason to engage in that *ergon* is the hope of flourishing or prospering. It is only a hope because flourishing is a measure of a fully completed live. People can be happy and productive members of society for most of their lives then suffer horribly and find their good reputation destroyed at life's end. Such people do not flourish, according to Aristotle, "For one swallow does not make a summer, nor one day. Neither does one day or a short time make someone blessed and happy."33 This Aristotelian stipulation creates an interesting tension in virtue ethics; since material, historical events beyond individual control ultimately play a huge role in determining flourishing why devote oneself to the difficult task of developing *phronēsis* if it does not ensure happiness? Perhaps, this point may be understood as Aristotle's attempt at truth in advertising. A person with a happy *pathos* who is gifted with greatness of dunamis and who is shined upon by fate with wealth and successful offspring will very likely have a very happy life. Flourishing is however, a specific kind of happiness. It is not the consequentially maximized *pathos* of happiness. Instead, it is a sense of an accomplished life, spent well. The fortunate person above will ultimately lose all of his or her faculties, possessions, even life itself. Happiness based on these things is bound to lead to disappointment at the end. Choosing to pursue happiness that it based on how well one mastered one's character and turned it towards one's purpose in life is an attempt then to create a specific

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recolletion in others after death. In a sense, it harkens back to Aristotle's use of character in rhetoric mentioned above. Character is part of what persuades an audience of the truth of one's speech, and in that way, *eudaimonia* is part of what persuades an audience after one's death that one lived a true life of good purpose.

Obviously, librarianship is a profession and does not have a traditional mortal span. It does, however, have a need to persuade its audience, including its internal audience within the discipline, that it is of good purpose and worthy of trust. Developing *phronēsis* and other stable, recognizable virtues is one way to evoke that trust. This process cannot ensure a prosperous profession, but without practicing virtue ethics, the profession limits the possibility of achieving the positive regard associated with *eudaimonia*. In a sense, practicing the virtues and striving for *phronēsis* are their own rewards. Achieving *phronēsis* is achieving moral autonomy, and since greater autonomy for the library profession is the goal of this study, the search for librarianship's *ergon* is not aimed at achieving professional *eudaimonia*, but rather encouraging the pursuit of professional *phronēsis*.

Use of Virtue Ethics by Non-Library Professionals

The purpose of this section is to make the case that virtue ethics is making the transition from normative ethics to applied ethics in a number of professions and occupations. For a system of ethics to be applied means that it has as its focus a specific domain of human action. For example, the professional ethics of librarianship are ethics applied to the functions of this profession. Likewise, clinical ethics are ethics applied to health and treatment decisions, and business ethics are ethics applied to fair commerce. Demonstrating that applied virtue ethics are useful in a variety of professional domains strengthens the case that they are also useful in the domain of librarianship.
Before addressing any specific profession, with the intent of discussing the general practicality of virtue ethics, I begin this section with a brief introduction to Lisa Tessman's argument, from her 2005 book *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles*. Tessman works in the area of feminist ethics, and her project here is to critique *eudaimonia* as a tool of philosophical liberation.\(^3^4\) She analyzes virtue ethics capacity to promote liberation for those whose senses of self have suffered "moral damage" resulting from participation in oppressive ethical systems.\(^3^5\) She emphasizes the burdens that suffering due to injustice places on individuals' sense of self. She further critiques neo-Aristotelians for focusing on the individual's responsibility in the flourishing process and not advocating more for the kinds of anti-poverty social reforms that would make flourishing more likely.\(^3^6\) Despite *eudaimonia* theory's limitations when dealing with the oppressed, Tessman concludes by praising it for its tendency toward, "the affirmation and embracing of life," it is worth pursuing for liberative practice.\(^3^7\)

Tessman's conclusion points out something that seems important about virtue ethics: it is an ethics of ownership over happiness. There is something both empowering and liberative about being able to set the standard for one's own purpose, one's virtues, and one's concept of flourishing. The same is true for professions as well. The rest of the world may resist these terms, but within the virtue ethics perspective the only norm that matters is whether persons or professions are being true to the chosen reason for being.

\(^{3^4}\) Tessman, *Burdened Virtues*, 3.

\(^{3^5}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{3^6}\) Ibid., 35.

\(^{3^7}\) Ibid., 168.
General Works on Professional Virtue Ethics

The leading work on the history and challenges of developing a professional ethic is the 2001 book, *Virtue Ethics and Professional Roles* by Justin Oakley and Dean Cocking. In applying virtue ethics to specific roles of professionals, they assert:

Good professional roles must be part of a good profession, and a good profession, on our virtue ethics approach, is one which involves a commitment to a key human good, a good which plays a crucial role in enabling us to live a humanly flourishing life.\(^{38}\)

The value of incorporating virtue ethics into the professional context is based on the belief that good professions aid flourishing. The following clarifies what they mean by professional role and human activity:

For Aristotle, good human activity is analysed in terms of achieving excellence in performing various functions relevant to characteristically human activity. So, if we think of excellence in performing a function in terms of carrying out a role well, such as the personal roles of being a parent or a friend, or the professional roles of being a teacher or a doctor, then the project to capture appropriately the nature and value taken to mark such roles seems to sit well with the ethical framework provided by the Aristotelian account of good human activity.\(^{39}\)

To fulfill a professional role is to be a member of the profession and to act in accord with the nature of the profession. This sets up a direct parallel with the development of character in a person: understanding function, deciding to develop character, gaining *phronēsis* through ethically deliberate actions, and balancing the virtues are the same ones that a profession takes. In this way, professional role and character become analogous concepts.

A second general source on the applied virtue ethics is Rebecca Walker and Phillip Ivanhoe's 2007-edited collection *Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Working*

\(^{38}\) Oakley and Cocking, *Virtue Ethics and Professional Roles*, 74.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 115.
Problems. Unlike Oakley and Cocking's work, Walker and Ivanhoe are not presenting their own theory of professional virtue ethics. Instead, they have collected essays on the use of virtue ethics and virtue theory not only in recognized professions such as law, medicine, psychiatry, and education, but also in environmentalism, anger and soldiering, the ethical dimension of race, famine and affluence, and filial piety. The breadth of professions covered and the abstract nature of other included essays demonstrate that applying virtue ethics to real world circumstances is a mature scholarly pursuit. Comparing virtue ethics to other normative ethics, Walker and Ivanhoe assert, "The sophistication and richness of what is now a substantial body of literature on this topic proves that this is where it belongs and likely will remain."\(^{40}\)

Medical Profession

The medical profession is a fruitful area for the application of virtue ethics. Edmund Pellegrino's 1995 essay, "Toward a Virtue-Based Normative Ethics for the Health Professions" set the stage for a revival of medical virtue ethics. His work accomplishes three goals: to explain why virtue ethics went into decline, to analyze the concept of virtue for the medical profession, and to relate virtue ethics to existing theories of medical ethics. Pellegrino identifies the Hippocratic Oath and Hippocratic Corpus as being virtue based and acting as a cross-cultural unifying force in medical ethics.\(^{41}\) He argues that this history of virtue-based ethics, plus a dissatisfaction with principle-based ethics, an appreciation for the need of stronger normativity,


\(^{41}\) Pellegrino, “Toward a Virtue-based Normative Ethics for the Health Professions,” 264.
and the sense that character should not be omitted from professional ethics primes the medical profession to accept a more virtue-oriented professional ethics.\textsuperscript{42}

David C. Thomasma provides a different explanation for why medicine is receptive to virtue ethics; it lacks viable alternatives. He traces this absence to the realization that modern bioethics had developed to the point that all bases for ethical determinations were considered to be arbitrary.\textsuperscript{43} In response to this Thomasma argues that an ethical system based on casuistry, or a case by case, rather than one based on principles, combined with an emphasis on \textit{phronēsis} could overcome the crisis of arbitrary foundations. He claims that medical ethics then must accept that they are operating in an arena lacking moral certitude and rely on the experience of patients and physicians in medical practices to determine what is moral.\textsuperscript{44} The emphasis of virtue ethics on a self-created, functional standard for authority positions it well to deal with charges of moral relativism. It makes no claims to universality and takes the experiences of individual professionals seriously instead of expecting assent to principles.

In light of what he sees as the industrialization of the medical profession, Daniel Sulmasy poses the question, "should medical schools be schools for virtue?"\textsuperscript{45} His answer is yes, they should, as a professional ethics based on virtues will be more likely to produce trustworthy physicians who typify the kinds of traits people think of when they consider who they want to be their care provider. In light of the industrial model of medicine, where productivity is more important than humanity, Sulmasy asserts that any attempt to install virtue ethics into medical

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 266.
\textsuperscript{43} Thomasma, “Aristotle, Phronesis and Postmodern Bioethics,” 68.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{45} Sulmasy, “Should Medical Schools Be Schools for Virtue?” 514.
schools will have to be "countercultural."\textsuperscript{46} From this it appears that in the medical profession, virtue ethics also is seen as a means of addressing what has become an excessive emphasis on the quantifiable aspects of the profession that is at the expense of individuals' sense of human connection.

The nursing practice is also a fertile profession for developing professional virtue ethics. Alan Armstrong asserts that the strong emotional state brought on by illness and nurses' corresponding therapeutic mission to ease suffering form the basis for the good fit of a person-centric ethics.\textsuperscript{47} Much of what Armstrong considered beneficial are the flexibility and dignity that come from "using judgment and moral wisdom to enable nurses to make morally good choices and decisions with patients in different circumstances."\textsuperscript{48} Armstrong does not use the word autonomy to describe the flexibility that virtue ethics supply, but his language approaches the same idea. His essay lends support to my argument that virtue ethics' person-centric nature promotes autonomy and does so in a compassionate rather than selfish way.

\textit{The Legal Profession}

The same year Pellegrino wrote his argument for virtue ethics in medicine, 1995, Anthony Kronman wrote one for the law, in his book \textit{The Lost Lawyer: Failing Ideals of the Legal Profession}. That book centers on the idea of the lawyer-statesman, who is, "not just an accomplished technician, but a distinctive and estimable type of human being -- a person of

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 515.

\textsuperscript{47} Armstrong, 111.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 120.
practical wisdom. The lawyer-statesman Kronman is describing seems to be a *phronimos*, one who has achieved *phronēsis*. Kronman advocates a turn to virtue ethics because he senses that his profession is changing in ways that make it less deliberative and that reflect a subtle change in the way that lawyers view themselves and their profession. He argues that these changes correspond with the collapse of the lawyer-statesman model. Returning to a character-centric approach to virtue brings the ideals of the profession closer to the act of judging. He expresses the idea that legal judgment should be made through a process of personal deliberation, with knowledge of the purpose for the law, and influenced by concern for the public good, thus making it more likely that the law be used ethically rather than technically. Kronman's decision to emphasize the lawyer-statesman model makes central the idea of personal responsibility in employing his profession's purpose in society. This is also what I hope to do by emphasizing virtue ethics for librarianship, to promote the idea that application of librarianship's function is the responsibility of librarians regardless of, to use Oakley and Cocking’s term, their professional roles.

Amy Gutmann takes Kronman's character argument and compares it to the standard and justice conceptions of the law to demonstrate that regardless of one's orientation among the three, the kind of deliberation Kronman called for is still valuable. Her core question is, even in light of this value, can virtue be taught to lawyers? She answers in the affirmative and provides two ways it might be possible to promote deliberation. First, promote better communication between

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49 Kronman, *The Lost Lawyer*, 16.

50 Ibid., 354.

51 Ibid., 62.

52 Gutmann, “Can Virtue Be Taught to Lawyers,” 1759.
lawyers and their clients by making education for law more clinical, as in the medical profession.\textsuperscript{53} She suggests that the clinical portion could feature developing a disposition of deliberation as its focus. Second, teach reasoning skills in order to improve the ability to evaluate the moral consequences of rival legal strategies.\textsuperscript{54} Gutmann does not explicitly advocate for a virtue ethics approach to legal education, but she does make suggestions that are useful for anyone considering applying virtue ethics to professional pedagogy. In the case of pedagogy for librarianship, one might consider the question, what should clinical training and educating for the moral consequences for rival strategies entail?

\textit{Key Theories from Other Professions}

From the business profession, J. Thomas Whetstone concludes that character-based business ethics should be included with existing deontological and consequentialist theories of ethics to form a "tripartite" approach to ethics.\textsuperscript{55} He asserts that virtue theory is worth including because it "focuses on the motivations of the actor and the sources of action, bringing a dynamic to ethical understanding."\textsuperscript{56} Herein, I share his conclusion that act-centric and character-centric approaches both impart useful ways of understanding the ethics of a situation. Whetstone's work provides a model for the idea that different approaches to ethics do not have to be mutually exclusive.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 1770.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 1771.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Whetstone, “How Virtue Fits Within Business Ethics,” 112.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 111.
\end{itemize}
In the realm of education, Elliot Eisner claims that educators should change their emphasis from *epistêmê*, to *phronësis*, and from there to artistry.\(^{57}\) *Epistêmê* is justified true knowledge, so Eisner is saying that the work of the good teacher is not to impart knowledge but first to develop the disciplined deliberative character of the student and then to encourage that student to act creatively. Eisner calls for a culture change within schools to give teachers the freedom they need to shake off a standards-based approach and instead focus on education as creation.\(^{58}\) I do not hold Eisner's position that practical wisdom and creativity are more important parts of pedagogy than teaching factual content, but I do hold that they should be equal partners. In the realm of pedagogy for librarianship, along with trying to impart justified, true beliefs, it is equally important to discuss formation of character and to encourage the willingness to engage in creative experimentation. Not every student should be encouraged to pursue practical wisdom, only those with an interest in it, but knowledge that librarianship has a character and that the actions of librarians created and continue to shape that character should be an important part of pedagogy for the ethics of librarianship. This is consistent with the spirit of *phronësis*, which advocates ethical deliberation, but also decisive action for the sake of gaining experience.

To demonstrate the depth of penetration of virtue ethics into a variety of professions, here is a list of a few representative essays. Sandra Dickson argues for the use of Aristotle's doctrine of the mean for journalists. Her intent is to strengthen credibility among the public, much as in rhetoric developing a good character creates trust in an audience.\(^{59}\) Preston Stovall discusses the

\(^{57}\) Eisner, “From Epistemê to Phronësis to Artistry in the Study and Improvement of Teaching,” 375.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 384.

\(^{59}\) Dickson, “The ‘Golden Mean’ in Journalism,” 36.
importance of professional self-awareness in engineering.\textsuperscript{60} Developing professional self-awareness is analogous to developing \textit{phronēsis} in individuals. He includes a line about teaching the virtue ethics of engineering, but it seems to apply equally to teaching a virtue ethics of librarianship:

Teaching professional virtue ethics requires encouraging young professionals to see their professions as instrumental both in the development and maintenance of the societies in which they live, and as constituting their own particular social identity.\textsuperscript{61}

This expression of relationship between individual identity and the professional development of society captures so well what virtue ethics brings to a profession differently than do other approaches to ethics.

Finally, Jere R. Francis argues for Alasdair MacIntyre’s version of virtue ethics, using moral agency as a means of promoting internal awards in the accounting profession.\textsuperscript{62} Internal rewards are the goods that come from discipline and ethical deliberation, apart from any hope for \textit{eudaimonia}. This point is an important one on which to conclude the review of professions' use of virtue ethics because arguing for the value of a professional ethic of librarianship does not mean arguing that the profession should look forward to experiencing flourishing. Flourishing results, or does not result, in large part due to circumstantial happenings outside of personal control. The profession, as the person does, should conceptualize prosperity because such conceptualization is useful in setting goals beyond the momentary decision. However, since force of will alone cannot ensure flourishing, it seems a better use of will to focus on developing

\textsuperscript{60} Stovall, “Professional Virtue and Professional Self-Awareness,” 109.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 130.

\textsuperscript{62} Francis, “After Virtue?” 5.
character, the quality of which develops in relationship to one's degree of devotion to it. Developing the kind of relationship between identity and function to society Stovall advocates could have significant effects on the identity of the profession and the responsibility of the individual librarian to that identity. Such effects can only promote greater professional autonomy.

Modeling Virtue Ethics for Librarianship

The critical piece of knowledge for developing professional virtue ethics for librarianship is librarianship's *ergon*. Uncovering that *ergon* is the purpose of Chapter 3; therefore, the virtues of librarianship, or a concept of *eudaimonia* for librarianship, are related in that discussion. What remains for me here is to discuss the roles of *ethos*, *hexit*, and *phronēsis* for librarianship, in order to demonstrate that the basic normative method virtue ethics uses is applicable to the library profession in general and to the promotion of professional autonomy in particular. Since my aim in this study has been to promote professional autonomy by finding an avenue for reconciling the two concepts of the discipline that developed after society began to value knowledge differently, ideally the model for *ethos* in particular would accommodate both librarianship and information science.

*Modeling Ethos*

The discipline of library studies and information science effectively possesses a dual *ethos*, which is the issue at the root of the autonomy crisis. One part of the *ethos* centers on the library as place, with the public good as its ultimate concern. The other part centers on information as concept and its many valuable applications for society. Librarianship is a historically-feminized profession, as are those of social work, teaching, and nursing. Information science allies itself with computer science, engineering, and mathematics, all historically-
masculinized professions and enjoys the associated legitimacy of that masculinity. I argue it is impossible to resolve the problem of the disparity in the appraised value of work traditionally performed by women while still striving for the legitimacy provided by association with work performed by men. In Chapter 4, I argue that understanding the functional cause for the need for greater security will offer a new approach for resolving this persistent problem.

Even without finding the *ergon*, there are points of connection between the identities in the discipline. They tend to share graduate programs and earn the same degree. Their existing ethical bases share concern for privacy, access, and intellectual freedom. They share a realist perspective with faith in materiality. They share professional tasks, including the organization and optimization of information and the preservation of information. In this regard, their commonalities outnumber their differences. Yet, if character is the observable sum of difficult choices, the fact remains that librarianship and information science are still dealing with the ramifications of a decision made thirty years ago, the seeds of which were planted forty years earlier. The present day is not the end state in the relationship between librarianship and information science. The commonalities they share today might not be shared in forty more years, to the detriment of both parts of the discipline. What is needed to keep the two together is an idea of character that supersedes the public good/information value divide. This need recalls what Oakley and Cocking say about good professions: they point to a good human activity. For want of another term, I refer here to the human activity that information science and librarianship both support as *civilizationing*. They make it possible for human beings to shape the world in ways that are conducive to human thriving through the exploitation of knowledge. Once the *ergon* is uncovered, this place keeper term can be replaced with something more nuanced. For
now, this idea forms a character bridge using a shared function that is a more fundamental good than the particular idea of the good used by either branch of the discipline.

_Modeling Hexis_

Before the combined librarianship and information science discipline can create a *hexis* or stable condition of mind or body that one must work to develop, the discipline must decide that it is important to develop a strong, ethical character. In essence, the discipline must be persuaded that autonomy is important enough to set aside its differences in preferred identity. One avenue for this is if the *ergon* of the discipline is so critical that independence from the other discipline is not worth risking failing to fulfill the function. Another would be the recognition that fulfilling the function would be impossible for each identity without the other. Again, it would ideally be a function that reconciles information as commodity and information as a public good, which would require a change in mindset about the profession. Public services, technical services, technology infrastructure, and information project development would all be carried out with the recognition that those individual roles were done fulfilling a purpose, accomplishing some good for society. It would be up to each individual librarian or information specialist to first decide whether or not to pursue virtue ethics, and if so to then work toward developing a stability of disposition essential for pursuing excellence. Regardless of the nature of the library, whether it is academic, public, school, special, or information center, cultivating the idea that it is moral to crave excellence is a transformative idea that, as Eisner and Gutmann independently argued, will require difficult changes in the professional culture. Again, it likely would take an *ergon* that is significant enough to make the challenge of disciplining oneself for excellence seem to be worth the effort.
**Modeling Phronēsis**

One alternative then would be promoting the desirability of excellence by building *phronēsis* into library and information science curricula, so that new generations of librarians and information specialists would be educated with virtue in mind. These curricula are designed to meet the standards of accrediting bodies, so any significant changes would have to be authorized by the professional bodies responsible for accreditation. With that limitation in mind, there are ways to promote the development of *phronēsis*, the virtue of instinctive, moral decision-making. Ethical deliberation, followed by action, is the essence of *phronēsis*. A supplemental apprentice or mandatory internship model, in the mold of medical, psychological, or social work clinicals would seem to be the best way to develop *phronēsis*, but only if preceded by course work in *sophia* or ethical theory of librarianship and information science to provide the foundation for deliberation. Since *phronēsis* is often learned through the observation of a *phronimos*, another approach might be practitioner mentorships. Most important for modeling *phronēsis* is communicating the mindset that the only moral transgression is *akrasia*, or literally, ethical incontinence. From the perspective of virtue ethics, being true to the function of the profession is the sum of professional morality. That freedom to set one's own standard for morality is coupled with the responsibility to improve oneself as a professional by seeking excellence in one's role in fulfilling the profession's function in society. It is a radically different concept than submitting to act-based transgressive professional ethics, but one that places the dignity of the professional at the center of all of his or her professional actions. It is my task in Chapter 5, with the *ergon* uncovered, to make the case that the benefits of autonomy are worth the challenge of incorporating such a different ethical approach. The next chapter addresses how this study has uncovered the *ergon* of librarianship through the use of hermeneutical phenomenology.
CHAPTER 3

A METHOD FOR IDENTIFYING LIBRARIANSHIP'S FUNCTION

The previous chapter made a case for virtue ethics as a viable source of professional ethics for librarianship. By necessity, it was a partial case, since a virtue ethics system relies on knowledge of librarianship's function as its source of normative authority, and that function has yet to be introduced. This chapter makes the argument that the function of librarianship can be determined through the use of hermeneutical phenomenology. Though the connection to hermeneutical phenomenology may seem remote, I aim to reveal that connection in a three-part discussion.

Part one of this argument demonstrates how even if neo-Aristotelian thought on virtue ethics is not a normative source of authority, it is versatile enough to be used in professional ethics. Starting from the end of the discussion of neo-Aristotelian metaphysics in the previous chapter, one might well want to question its viability as a normative authority given contemporary epistemological standards. ¹ Furthermore, if it is not viable as a source for normativity, then how viable are virtue ethics concepts derived from Aristotelian thought? In this first part, I demonstrate that a system based on virtue ethics is adaptable enough to be used as professional ethics for a discipline that is primarily social scientific by showing how core virtue ethics concepts have found expression in the works of both Immanuel Kant and David Hume, two giants of the Enlightenment with radically different social and intellectual projects.

¹ Epistemology is the philosophical study of what qualifies as justified true belief.
In part two, I focus on how best to create an argument for function without relying on metaphysical causality. This quest for function begins with Hans-Georg Gadamer's work presenting *phronēsis* as a hermeneutic virtue. Gadamer's unique approach to interpreting meaning bridges the gap between Aristotle and Martin Heidegger in a way that opens a precedent for using hermeneutical phenomenology to determine function. With the connection between virtue and hermeneutics, I include a broader discussion of what hermeneutical phenomenology is and how it functions as a means of gaining knowledge, providing examples of research in various disciplines that use hermeneutical phenomenology to study the meaning of events.

Having established the merits of hermeneutical phenomenology to determine function, I then consider the problem of stability in part three. Here, I argue that the *ergon* can function as a normative basis for virtue ethics because of its presumed metaphysical stability, meaning that once it is determined it does not change. Without stability in the profession's function, there can be no stability in the virtues. The task then is to find a structure in hermeneutical phenomenology that possesses corresponding stability. I argue that, as presented by Paul Ricoeur, the identity narrative is such a structure. Through persistence of identity and continuity of plot and theme, an identity narrative possesses the same combination of stability and explanatory power that the *ergon* traditionally provides virtue ethics. Following the development of this argument, the remainder of the chapter considers hermeneutics as a method used in professional research and describes its specific application in this study, in terms of the discursive acts investigated and the criteria used.
Part 1: Evaluating Virtue Ethics' Viability

As mentioned previously, virtue ethics is a normative approach to ethics. Historically, it requires a teleological, or at least metaphysical, source to establish its normative authority. The metaphysical basis pursued in this study is the *ergon* of librarianship because function is a concept that is sufficiently discrete to direct decision-making without being as categorically expansive a concept as purpose. Purpose and function are both causal theories; purpose is the answer to the question "why does something exist?" while function answers the question "what does something do or accomplish?" My aim has been to devise a method that resonates with contemporary worldviews, in order that it might be more readily adopted by librarians. To this end, I have adopted a methodological approach that does not require an argument from metaphysics in order to provide normativity or stability. Since virtue ethics began with and remains influenced by Aristotelian thought, it is appropriate to consider first how a neo-Aristotelian advocate would find the *ergon* of librarianship. Understanding the limits of Aristotle's metaphysics then helps explain both why I needed to devise another method and why the method I used has the characteristics it does.

*Neo-Aristotelian Thought and the Ergon*

What do scholars assume Aristotle meant by *ergon*, and how can one determine an *ergon* using neo-Aristotelian thought? As was established previously, *ergon* literally means work or task and has connotations of function. Purpose and function are both expressions of Aristotle's causal theory. In order to understand causal theory, it is important to refer to Aristotle's

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2 Ultimately, the motivation for seeking an alternative method is not that I consider librarians to be disinclined to learn more about the neo-Aristotelian worldview; rather, as a product of the modern worldview myself, I ultimately do not find metaphysical causal arguments convincing and have sought out another means of establishing a functional argument.
metaphysics because any cause that exists causes something to be. Therefore, one must understand what is meant by "something" and "being" before causes can be understood.  

As Aristotle defines it, metaphysics is the study of being *qua* being, that is, a discipline dedicated to understanding the being-quality of being. In Book Gamma of *The Metaphysics*, Aristotle develops the argument that the primary means of understanding being *qua* being comes from understanding the nature of substance. As virtue and business ethicist Edwin Hartman clarifies, Aristotle focuses on exploring the substance of particular, material bodies instead of universal, Platonic forms because universals are dependent upon particular instances to define their properties. In an effect to systematize the particular nature of substance, Aristotle claims that substance is hylomorphic in nature, consisting of both form and matter. Matter is that which comprises something and form is the configuration in which matter finds itself. For example a bowl and a spoon might both be made of wood. They would then have the same matter but different forms.

The American synoptic philosopher Wilfrid Sellars considers how form and function relate to substance and concludes that since form provides the more particular differentiation, function is the more determinative nature in defining the being of substance. In the example above, while one could talk about the "thing-ness" of a bowl or a spoon, one would not say a wood but rather a piece of wood making it closer to a universal category rather than a particular,  

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3 Considering the scope and complexity of Aristotle's output on those subjects, only the barest framework for what he is assumed to have meant on these topics is presented here. That framework should be sufficient to demonstrate the disconnect between neo-Aristotelian thought and a more contemporary worldview.


material body. So while substances consist of both matter and form, form is more critical to understanding something's being.

The hylomorphic distinction is only one of Aristotle's attempts to understand substance. Aristotle has ten secondary categories in his system of description: substance, quantity, qualification, a relative, where, when, being-in-a-position, having, doing, or being-affected. Of these, substance is closest to describing being. Aristotle notes that substance is a secondary category of being that is capable of possessing other secondary categories. These categories are secondary because they describe something rather than being something on which other categories are predicated. For example, Socrates' quality of being Socrates is not predicated upon anything else, so Socrates is a primary category. The category human is predicated upon the existence of Socrates and all other humans, so it is not a primary category. The main message is that reality exists in particular instances, rather than in universal ideals.

How does substance come to possess form and secondary categories? To answer this, it is important to understand Aristotle's theory of the four causal forces. Aristotle outlines four causal forces in a passage in book II of his treatise on Physics: material, formal, efficient, and final causes. Material cause is causality resulting from the matter of a substance, while formal cause is causality from the form assumed by a substance. These first two causal forces capture the hylomorphic nature of substance. The efficient cause represents the actions of some agency upon the substance. For example, because a woodworker chose to shape wood into a bowl a bowl is effected or caused to be. The final cause captures something's telos or reason for being; for

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8 Aristotle, Categories, 2a16–2a18.

9 Ibid., 1b25–2a4.

10 Aristotle, Metaphysics, Gamma II.81.

example, a woodworker may choose to make a bowl because he needs something to hold something else and bowls are useful for holding things within them. Not everything is acted upon by all four causes, but all instances of being can be explained by some combination of them.

The priority of particular instances and primary categories, along with the ten secondary categories, including substance and the four causal forces, comprise what is necessary to understand the framework of Aristotle's metaphysics and to consider how it could be used to determine librarianship's *ergon*. With most items, determining the *ergon* is simple. The *ergon* of a bowl is to hold things. Even fantastically complex objects such as the human eye have a simple *ergon*, to see. Finding librarianship's *ergon* is more challenging because, as a profession, librarianship does many things.

The intuitive answer might be that the *ergon* of librarianship is to make libraries happen, but there are several problems with this assertion. First, making libraries happen is only one facet of librarianship. It is also a scholarly discipline with a domain of knowledge. Librarianship’s core values include democracy, social equity and justice, the public good, and diversity. There is also the sense that making libraries happen is not one kind of action, but many. Organizing information is not the same kind of work as answering reference questions. Reader's advisory is not the same thing as cataloging. Knowledge management is not the same thing as holding story time. Yet, these are all equal facets of librarianship. One could argue that making a bowl requires several skills of the woodworker, but those skills all relate to one kind of matter, wood and the tools used to work it. Librarians' skills relate to many kinds of substances, from immaterial, conceptual information, to the preservation and conservation of archived objects, to working with people to resolve book challenges.
This evidence does not lead to the conclusion that librarianship lacks an *ergon*, rather that the simple "the woodmaker makes things from wood" kind of *ergon* is not sufficient to capture it. Instead, it requires a subtler approach, one that Aristotle used to understand the *ergon* of humanity.

All living things, according to Aristotle, have souls.\(^\text{12}\) Plants have souls that govern growth, and animals have souls that govern growth and the satisfaction of appetites. Humans have these, too, as well as rational souls that allow for directed action through reflection. Historian of ancient Western philosophy Richard Sorabji notes Aristotle's use of soul as both a marker for something's capacities and a biological marker for its physical capabilities, pointing out the physical rather than mental nature of the soul.\(^\text{13}\) As Sorabji contends, in the post-Descartes age, if the idea of soul is used at all, soul generally refers to some faculty of mind whereas previously it referred both to consciousness and the power to make use of nutrition.\(^\text{14}\) So since librarianship is an association of humans, with rational embodied souls, it is appropriate to think of librarianship's *ergon*, as something that is rationally intended. In this way, the *ergon* does not have to be a particular action that is carried out, but rather something that librarianship has the potential to do.

In Book Theta of *Metaphysics*, Aristotle uses the term *dunamis* to capture the idea of potentiality, in contrast with *energeia* or actuality.\(^\text{15}\) To explain the idea of *dunamis*, he discusses the idea of a statue that pre-exists in wood before it is carved. The *dunamis* of librarianship would be that work which pre-exists in librarianship before it is expressed. It would be the


\(^{13}\) Sorabji, “Body and Soul in Aristotle,” 64–65.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 67.

of all the capacities of librarianship, waiting to be expressed. As the statue is expressed from the wood, librarianship is expressed from the collected wisdom of librarians. Expressed using the idea of *dunamis*, the *ergon* of librarianship is to "do what librarianship ideally does" and the standard for *phronēsis*, to "do what a good librarian would ideally do in this circumstance."

While these expressions seem true, they do not have much persuasive power, and a more convincing means of determining the *ergon* must be employed.

*Epistemologically Modern Approaches to Virtue Ethics*

It is important to remember, concepts such as *ergon*, *aretē*, *phronēsis* and *eudaimonia* are not necessarily tied to Aristotle's metaphysics. Certainly, someone better versed in neo-Aristotelian thought may be able to produce a more nuanced account of an *ergon* based on soul and *dunamis*. The same holds true for an *ergon* based on a genus and species style categorization of librarianship in comparison with other human activities. However nuanced the theory may be, it is difficult for contemporary readers to take seriously the idea of librarianship's soul, or its potential as an actual property, in order to make it the basis of a normative theory of ethics.

Historically, Aristotle's metaphysics yielded to Isaac Newton's mechanics and later quantum probability, based on their superior predictive powers, while Aristotle's concept of substances and qualities yielded to modern atomic theory and the chemistry of Antoine Lavoisier and Dmitri Mendeleev, based on their superior explanatory power.16 Finally, the explanatory power of Aristotle's psychology yielded to modern biochemistry and cognitive neuroscience due to their curative powers. Despite the depth of contemplation and the intellectual rigor Aristotle and his

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16 Lavoisier contributed much of the nomenclature scientists use to describe chemistry and is largely responsible for the development of stoichiometry, the method of measuring the ratio of products to reactants in a chemical reaction. He effectively modernized the discipline, severing it as a discipline from alchemy. Mendeleev is best known for his table of elements, which systematized our way of understanding how elements’ physical properties related to one another. The common thread between the two is that just as Newton changed the way scientists think about causality, Lavoisier and Mendeleev changed the way scientists think about ontology.
devotees have put into constructing his worldview, epistemology since the Enlightenment has found other means of argumentation more readily compelling. Consequently, a theory of function derived from metaphysics and Aristotelian causality seems most unlikely to be received as normative for professional conduct.

To demonstrate how virtue ethics can still form the basis of a persuasive theory of professional ethics, I discuss below how leading thinkers of the Enlightenment period valued these concepts enough to continue developing theory using virtue ethics even as they contended with other sources of Aristotelian authority. The two epistemologically modern theories of virtue ethics that I consider are those of Immanuel Kant and David Hume. These two thinkers are among the most influential of the Enlightenment period; their work with these concepts demonstrates that while not central to the Enlightenment project they were still compatible.

*Kant and Virtue*

The virtue theory of the central figure in the German Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, is primarily contained in two works, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) and "Metaphysical First Principles of the Doctrine of Virtue," which is the second part of his *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797). Robert Louden, ethicist and scholar of Kant's moral theory, draws attention to the fact that the existence of Kant's work in virtue theory is problematic for modern virtue ethicists who have in large part defined the merit of their revival in their status as an alternative to deontological ethics. Kant is strongly associated with deontology, so strong ties to virtue within his own ethics would challenge the notion that character and duty ethics are oppositional. The lack of opposition is important; I am proposing only to supplement existing

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17 Epistemology is the philosophical study of knowledge and criteria for truth.

professional ethics, not replace them. If character and duty based ethics can co-exist in Kant's thought, they certainly can do so in librarianship's professional ethics.

Kant is unequivocal in his support of the role of character in his concept of ethics. Kant asserts at the beginning of *Groundwork*, “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be taken to be good without limitation, except a good will.” This exclusive language places at the very center of the concept of the good the necessity to have a good character. Following one's duty perfectly does not lead to the ethical life unless behavior is bound to a good will. Kant continues:

> Understanding, wit, judgment and whatever else the talents of the mind may be called, or confidence, resolve and persistency of intent, as qualities of temperament, are no doubt in many respects good and desirable; but they can also be extremely evil and harmful if the will that is to make use of these gifts of nature, and whose distinctive constitution is therefore called character, is not good.

In this way, obedience to duty without a rightly ordered will not only will fail to reach a standard of good moral behavior, it may also result in immoral behavior.

Louden argues that the purpose of good agency is the ability to act consistently with moral law in mind. For Kant, he explains, the absolute good remains the universal moral good, derived by reason, but what makes it a good for humans is the capacity to internalize reason into a disciplined, good will. Kantian ethicist Anne Margaret Baxley identifies this principle of developing self-discipline through devotion to reason as Kant's principle of autocracy. Autocracy and autonomy differ in that autocracy explicitly involves self-disciplining impulses

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20 Ibid.


22 Baxley, *Kant’s Theory of Virtue*, 50.
that would be out of accord with reason, while autonomy is simply self-direction.\textsuperscript{23} Louden comes to the conclusion that autonomy may be sufficient in observing the laws of reason, but autocracy is required to form the good will required to devote a life to reason.\textsuperscript{24}

The process of developing autocracy brings to mind the process of developing \textit{phronēsis}, which requires some metaphysical grounding in order to create normativity. In this case, Kant's doctrine of the right, or the goodness and universality of reason, is sufficient metaphysical grounding. Kant claims that developing metaphysics for morality is still necessary in the age of Newton and chemistry because without an \textit{a priori} to determine what is moral, experience would be the only grounds anyone would have for judgment, and experience can only teach one about that which one would naturally seek, namely pleasure.\textsuperscript{25} With Kant's doctrine of right established as the goal, one develops the mental discipline to choose the right, which is analogous to choosing to develop a \textit{hexis} of serious devotion to building a strong, ethical character. Once the \textit{hexis} is in place, one can begin developing \textit{phronēsis}, or in Kant's case, autocracy. This process of self-possession opens up avenues for freedom. Deontological freedom is the ability to pursue the rational or highest good, and the freedom of virtue ethics is the freedom to pursue \textit{eudaimonia}.

Significantly, \textit{phronēsis} and autocracy are different concepts: \textit{phronēsis} is the virtue of knowing of the best course of action, and autocracy is the capacity to discipline oneself to the best course of action. Still they function in the same liberative capacity for both approaches to ethics, shaping character in a way that readies it for engagement with the primary vehicle for

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 52.

\textsuperscript{24} Louden, “Kant’s Virtue Ethics,” 57.

\textsuperscript{25} Kant, \textit{The Metaphysics of Morals}, trans. Gregor, 43–44. By this Kant means that despite the eagerness with which people during the Enlightenment turned away from Aristotle and towards empiricism, metaphysics still played a role in the consideration of ethical behavior. A system of ethics driven by experience would be biased towards the experiences one wanted to have. A system of ethics based on reason would not be biased in this way.
ethical improvement. This distinction between *phronēsis* and autocracy points out an important difference in the two ethical approaches to the good. As part of his effort to show that Kantian ethics possess many of the character-based qualities that appeal to business leaders, business ethicist Claus Dierksmeier expressed the idea that Kantian deontology refined the concept of *eudaimonia* in such a way as to limit the concept of flourishing to the pursuit of one's own perfection or to the happiness of others.26 Dierksmeier next defines virtue as what "assures the practical realization of the good."27

To summarize Kant's use of virtue ethics concepts, it is evident that Kantian deontology, although the prototypical Enlightenment era system of ethics, makes liberal use of core concepts of virtue ethics. It also relies on a metaphysical foundation, demonstrating that at least some ethics born during modernity still tolerate metaphysics, as long as the grounds being proposed to support them do not obviously contradict contemporary standards of epistemology. Kant did not use virtue ethics in a way that required the explicit development of an *ergon*, but his work did have a teleological element, where the purpose of life was to gain sufficient autonomy to pursue the highest good. Since the purpose of developing librarianship's professional virtue ethics is to unify competing identities within the discipline, appealing to the highest good has little reconciliatory power. Therefore, using a Kantian notion of purpose to guide virtue ethics does not appear to be the appropriate methodological solution.

*Hume and Virtue*

The leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment David Hume also developed a theory of virtue. Hume's primary works on the matter are *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), *An

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26 Dierksmeier, “Kant on Virtue,” 604.

27 Ibid., 605.
Hume's theory of virtue makes an interesting counterpoint to that of Kant. The purpose of virtue in Kant's ethical system was to stimulate autocracy, which would lead to the repression of individual passions for the sake of the greater good. For Hume, writing decades earlier than Kant, the virtues are attributes that demonstrate that humans, contrary to the thought of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, possess motivations beyond self-interest. Hume displayed particular interest in the non-Aristotelian virtues of sympathy and benevolence and found that these emotions capture the social nature of ethics. The form of ethics based on or guided by emotions, instead of by reason, is known as sentimentalism. Glenn R. Morrow, a philosopher whose focus is morality and the law, argues that Hume's philosophy posits that sympathy, or the capacity to communicate the approbation of benevolence from person to person, is the universal a priori on which Hume based his ethics. Hume reports his idea of the virtues as, "every quality of the mind, which is useful or agreeable to the person himself or to others, communicates a pleasure to the spectator, engages his esteem, and is admitted under the honourable denomination of virtue or merit." After listing many virtues, which he posits are good for both the individual and society, Hume asks:

Who can dispute that a mind, which supports a perpetual serenity and cheerfulness, a noble dignity and undaunted spirit, a tender affection and good-will to all around; as it has more enjoyment within itself, is also a more animating and rejoicing spectacle, than if

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28 Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, 84. Hobbes argued that without the intervening power of an absolute monarch human nature to pursue pleasure would lead to a war of all against all. Locke argued that each person is made by divine provenance with the directive to pursue life, liberty, health, and property. Civil law is put into place to keep others from abridging that directive. Even though the political solutions are radically different, both philosophers operate under the idea the human nature is acquisitive instead of collaborative or even communal.


dejected with melancholy, tormented with anxiety, irritated with rage, or sunk into the most abject baseness and degeneracy?31

Hume's point is that the purpose of virtue is to propagate in society these useful and agreeable conditions. This social aim is very different from the aim of either Aristotle or Kant, both of whom focused on reformation of the character of an individual as the main objective of virtue.

Rosalind Hursthouse's 1999 work, "Virtue Ethics and Human Nature," is a thoughtful comparison of the virtue ethics of Hume with her own neo-Aristotelian tradition and finds there to be many fundamental differences. She doubts that Hume's is a full theory of virtue ethics. After examining Hume's almost metaphysical assertion about human nature and his criteria for what makes a virtue virtuous, she turns to the question of what counts as phronēsis in Hume's virtue ethics. She compares Hume's idea of phronēsis with a good critic of the arts and uses the principle of mutatis mutandis, or "with the necessary changes having been made," to suggest that modifying one's character then becomes an expression of aesthetics.32 Aesthetic pleasure is something that is refined over time, so that one comes to appreciate the rare over the gross.

Hursthouse critiques Hume's position by arguing that gaining virtue by adopting an aesthete's desire for ever more refined interpersonal behavior is a shallow approach to gaining virtue when compared to making a serious commitment to carry out difficult changes in one's character. It is my understanding that Hursthouse's critique here rests not on the social or interpersonal aspects of Hume's theory of virtue, since those who seek practical wisdom are encouraged to emulate those who have achieved practical wisdom. Also, there is a component in the concept of function that implies the other as member of a society. Function is the work or task that is done for its own ends, but those ends are some good for the community. Instead, it is the aesthetic quality of

31 Ibid.

the process, the fact that it is born out of pleasure instead of the disciplined formation of character that Hursthouse questions. My own position on the matter is more pragmatic. I suspect that some people will respond better to a refinement of pleasure than to a habit of serious reflection. The goal is the development of a discerning will, and in keeping with the adaptability value of a multiplication of methods, the path to that goal is less important that the destination.

In another point of conceptual connection, Hursthouse finds traces of the idea of *eudaimonia* in Hume's idea of the usefulness and agreeableness of the virtues. Hursthouse then concludes with the argument that in addition to lacking a clear idea of what counts as *phronēsis*, Hume's work lacks the important focus on the necessity of establishing conditions in childhood that are conducive for the development of the virtues. While humans are morally trainable to an extent, without a solid foundation in what is morally good, there are limits to what can be done to improve a person's character.\textsuperscript{33} Aesthetician Flint Schier claims that Hume's theory of agency is a well-developed theory of moral aesthetics.\textsuperscript{34} What Hursthouse identifies as a flaw in the aesthetics of agency from a neo-Aristotelian virtue perspective is where to find Hume's equivalent of the *ergon*. Aesthetics is something inherent in a person's nature, a perspective through which one sees the world, but which is also informed by experience. Just as the *ergon* is the normative lens through which a follower of virtue ethics views decision making, aesthetics provides a decision making lens for followers of sentimentalism.

The purpose of using Hume's virtue theory herein was to triangulate along with Kant's virtue ethics theory, Enlightenment-era responses with neo-Aristotelian thought. The reason why I feel this triangulation to be important is in anticipation of skepticism about the appropriateness for a social sciences-based discipline of both virtue ethics and the method that I intend to use to

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 81.

\textsuperscript{34} Schier, “Hume and the Aesthetics of Agency,” 127–8.
determine librarianship's function. Pointing out use of these terms in Enlightenment thought demonstrates that virtue ethics concepts are viable for a discipline that has a strong tradition of social science research, which is inspired by the Enlightenment idea that empiricism can explain all facets of nature, including human behavior. Pointing out how different the two great philosophers’ positions are demonstrates the amount of room that exists even within Enlightenment thought with which to experiment on how to arrive at a method for developing these concepts. That establishes a space large enough for the methodological approach I will outline below. Between Hume and Kant, the extremes of response to virtue ethics ideas are covered, from universal lawful reason to emotional and aesthetic dispositions. Hume eschewed telos, conventional metaphysics, the role of reason in the formation of ethics, the conflation of is and ought, and the role of seriousness of character in developing the virtues. In short, his approach to virtue ethics is about as far from Aristotle's as possible. And yet, Hume did find something inherently valuable in the concept of character and virtuousness and still used a decision making lens that was derived from a property that is part inborn and part experience driven. If thinkers with radically different Enlightenment social projects and equally different modern epistemologies can find virtue, character, and eudaimonia to be useful concepts, these concepts should still be meaningful to contemporary readers. Furthermore, I propose that a professional virtue ethics using these concepts can be designed in such a way that is simultaneously true to the Aristotelian concepts of virtue ethics and also takes into account contemporarily convincing epistemological authorities and concerns.

Part 2: Phronēsis and Hermeneutics

At this point in the process of developing an argument for finding librarianship's function, my focus turns from demonstrating the viability of virtue ethics in a post-
Enlightenment epistemological milieu and toward the work of a theorist whose interpretation of *phronēsis* directly informs this project, Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer was an important German philosopher of hermeneutics whose work spanned much of the 20th century. Gadamer is of interest to this study because his work defined philosophical hermeneutics as an intellectual virtue. In doing so, he linked the intellectual projects of two of his great influences, Aristotle and his teacher, the German existential and phenomenological philosopher Martin Heidegger. The approach I used in this study to uncover librarianship's function relies on, and in part is derived from, the conceptual connection Gadamer builds between virtue and hermeneutics.

Given the particulars of his education, it is not surprising that Gadamer made this connection. His early works focused on interpreting aspects of the work of Plato, Aristotle, and other classical Greek thinkers. His interests in hermeneutics and phenomenology were also a product of his education in Freiburg. Robert J. Dostal, a philosopher of Kant and phenomenology points out that Heidegger directed Gadamer’s second dissertation, which was required in Germany at the time. Gadamer also attended lectures from the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, and his interest in classical thought remained with him deep into his mature career. Gadamer’s affinity for the practical nature of Aristotelian philosophy seemed to lead him to incorporate *phronēsis* into his emerging theories of hermeneutics.

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35 Hermeneutics is the study of meaning and the interpretation of meaning. It was originally focused on textual interpretation, but philosophical hermeneutics incorporates any investigation of meaning.

36 Gadamer's thesis was on pleasure and dialogue in Plato, and his dissertation, directed by Heidegger, was on Plato's ethical dialogues. Two works of Plato that Gadamer incorporated and are most relevant to the question of virtue are the *Philebus* and *Gorgias*. They are dialogues that address the appropriate limits on the pursuit of pleasure and the ethical use of rhetoric.


39 He published *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* while he was in his early eighties.
How did Gadamer regard *phronēsis*? Lauren Barthold, Gadamer scholar and philosopher of hermeneutics, summarized his position on *phronēsis* as being that knowledge was for living and that the process of acquiring knowledge should prioritize human judgment over devotion to method.\(^{40}\) *Phronēsis*, thus, becomes the virtue that allows one to engage in hermeneutics effectively. A person with *phronēsis* possesses the discipline to listen and to reflect with partners in dialogues. For Gadamer, all knowledge is gained through dialogue with the other. Without *phronēsis*, one simply projects one's method onto the world, making inquiry a form of *praxis* rather than an encounter with nature or other humans.

In his most significant work, the 1960 book *Time and Method*, Gadamer describes the process of gaining understanding of meaning as a linguistic conversational process.\(^{41}\) Conversation is an act, and the real value of *phronēsis* comes from the fact that it is not just reflection, but rather reflection and action. *Phronēsis* therefore grants the capacity to be an agent of understanding's creation in a community. Through *phronēsis*, hermeneutics has the potential to counterbalance the homogenizing and dehumanizing tendencies of the scientific-technological worldview.\(^{42}\) This capacity is of particular interest, since while technology and scientific inquiry themselves are not antithetical to the traditional function of librarianship, positivism, scientism and technological determinism are antithetical.\(^{43}\)

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., 560.

\(^{43}\) Scientism is the dogmatization of the philosophy of science so that all other forms of epistemology are suspect. Positivism is the belief that only that which can be verified empirically or through mathematical or logical proof is epistemologically valid. Technological determinism is a theory that the introduction of disruptive technologies lead to changes in society, rather than social factors taking the lead in determining the adoption or rejection of technologies.
David P. Haney, literary hermeneut, further articulates that for Gadamer, "Phronēsis is a virtue of self-deliberation in the immediacy of the given situation,"\textsuperscript{44} which keeps the human agent at the center of the creation of understanding. Nonetheless, hermeneutics is not intended to be a method of inquiry but rather an integral part of how people come to know their world.\textsuperscript{45} At the core of Gadamer's prohibition against using hermeneutics as a method is the danger of taking the human element out of the process and reducing it to a mere analytical praxis. So, while in the next section I explore hermeneutical phenomenology explicitly as a method, the intent is to increase the autonomy of librarians by helping them develop normative professional ethics derived from something essential to librarian's function in society. This goal, and my subsequent engagement with discourse between librarians as they established traditions through which to resolve problems of lived experience, suggests that my use of Gadamer's thought is not a misappropriation but rather a continuation of his project.

\textit{Ontological Hermeneutics}

To understand Gadamer's project more clearly, it is necessary to understand the philosophical concepts behind his worldview, beginning with hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the philosophical study of meaning and the problem of its interpretation across history, between cultures, and spanning the gulf of human subjectivity. Coming into its own in Germany in the early 20th century, hermeneutics is a distinct movement within a classification of philosophy.\textsuperscript{46}

Hermeneutics was originally an approach to interpreting the meaning of historical texts, traditionally religious texts in particular. It satisfied a need of getting to the original meaning of

\textsuperscript{44} Haney, “Aesthetics and Ethics in Gadamer, Levinas, and Romanticism,” 39.

\textsuperscript{45} Gadamer, \textit{Truth and Method}, 471.

\textsuperscript{46} It is important to emphasize here that my purpose is to demonstrate hermeneutics' usefulness as a method, not to summarize the entire philosophical tradition.
the text, which was thought to be closest to the source of revelation. The tool used to accomplish this extraction of original meaning was the "hermeneutic circle" wherein parts of a text are compared to the whole and then again to the parts cyclically as a means of bringing insight into the text and drawing meaning out. Phenomenologist David Woodruff Smith notes that the domain of hermeneutics radically changed with the publication of *Being and Time*.\(^{47}\) Within it, the hugely influential and controversial philosopher Martin Heidegger reconceived hermeneutics as an analysis of meaning in all human experiences and in historical cultural questions in particular.\(^{48}\) Heidegger recapitulated hermeneutics into a means of approaching the fundamental question, what is the nature of being? It is this turn to the question of the nature of being that gives rise to the term ontological hermeneutics.\(^{49}\)

*Heidegger’s Being and Time*

Heidegger's hermeneutics were grounded in his understanding of phenomenology as the philosophical study of experiences. Heidegger's conception of phenomenology is notoriously complex, but it is helpful to think of it as his antidote to the dominance of scientific modes of determining truth, without itself being an epistemology. Phenomenology for Heidegger is not an analytical activity of the mind, but rather a disposition towards being receptive to disclosures, which are encounters with *Dasein*, the condition of being-in-the-world.\(^{50}\) What is relevant from

\(^{47}\) Smith, “Phenomenology,” sec. 4.


\(^{49}\) Ontology and metaphysics are both philosophical studies of being. Ontology can be thought of as focusing on the question what is being and metaphysics as focusing on how can people understand being. In practice, the two are often used synonymously.

\(^{50}\) Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 86–87. *Dasein* is Heidegger's concept of self-disclosive being. It is the "being-there" quality that is an essential precursor for all other experiences. The self-disclosure of objects at hand is the way the people come to make phenomenological sense of their surroundings.
Heidegger's approach to this project is that it is a disposition towards existence that is temporal and physical.

Dostal claims of Heidegger’s approach that existence is not a detached metaphysical condition but rather endless manifestations of space and time, constantly revealing themselves.⁵¹ For Heidegger, phenomenology is necessarily hermeneutic. All revelations require an interpretation to place them in lived experience. In this way for Heidegger, the hermeneutic circle changes from being a tool of textual analysis to one of self-creation. The movements of the circle are from the reception of disclosure to interpretation and back until death, making an ever more complicated synthesis of self and existence. This process of self-interpretation that people do all the time is the basis of thinking of lived experiences narratively. Heidegger did not establish a narrative method, but he did make it possible for scholars who follow his tenets to justify theirs, which is important to this study's approach.

Gadamer’s Truth and Method

Hans-Georg Gadamer's most important work, and the source of his hermeneutical argument, is Truth and Method. Gadamer characterizes the treatise as a resistance to the universal claims of the scientific method and as a means of recapturing the centrality of the experience of art.⁵² Gadamer is concerned with keeping the humanity in the Geisteswissensch or "human sciences" and recognizing that scientific investigation begins with the personhood of the researcher.⁵³

People know the world through indoctrination into a language, argues Gadamer, and all meaning comes to us through the lens of a language, tinted by the cultural understanding of

⁵² Gadamer, Truth and Method, xvi.
reality embedded in that language. This process of indoctrination causes us to form prejudices about everything. Because one cannot recreate the other person's reality, a scholar cannot assert with certainty the meaning expressed by a person from another time. This condition of isolation is called the horizon. The horizon can be a separation in language, time, culture, or subjectivity. Since people radically depend on one another to create a shared world, they must make an effort at mutual understanding, which is the process of entering into a conversation with the other. Rather than aggressively probing the reality of the other, one assumes an open disposition, a receptivity to the otherness of this horizon. The result is a fusion of horizons, where the scholar's perspective and the perspective of the other, as text or an art object being investigated, combine to make a new understanding.

As discussed above, the fusion process is facilitated by phronēsis. The basic posture of Gadamer's philosophy is to create understanding as a work of art, an ethic of openness and acceptance. Listening to the other is a virtue, and phronēsis allows for the cultivation of that virtue. Nonetheless, the fusion of horizons is not a license to create any interpretation of a text. The interpretation must rely on the language, syntax, and presentation of the text to enter into a conversation about the text's meaning. For my purposes, Gadamer provides not just a tool, but also a theoretical perspective. Instead of grafting a narrative to librarians of the past, here I have attempted to be open to their hard-fought, dialectical self-formation in times of professional crisis. In this project their dialectic may be viewed as a work of art, to be appreciated as such.

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54 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 481.
before being fused with my own sense of what their discourse might mean about my question of function.

Part 3: Ergon and Stability

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, in addition to a method for deriving librarianship's function in terms of meaning, there needs to be a degree of fixity as well to replicate the immutable nature of the *ergon*. Paul Ricoeur's work most strongly influences that aspect of my methodological approach. Ricoeur's main philosophical project was the search for a philosophical anthropology, an explanation for agency, that is, the relationship between act and identity. Ricoeur did his most significant work in this area in the three-volume *Time and Narrative* (1983, 1984, and 1988), in *From Text to Action* (1991), and in *Oneself as Another* (1992). Ricoeur's anthropology expresses the idea that there is no such thing as a pure act, one not interpreted through symbolic-linguistic interpretation. This assertion extends beyond Gadamer's idea that humans are language-using beings who communicate experience through linguistic symbols. Instead, he expresses the idea that meaningful human action is inherently discursive. By conceiving of life as text, it is possible to use the same analytical tools to analyze human agents in the world. Here, Russian structuralist Roman Jakobson influenced Ricoeur. Russian formalists Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska give an account of Jakobson's argument that the only distinction between literary works and any other discourse was that the creators of literature incorporated agreed-upon signs that would signal to readers that they were reading literature.

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59 Ibid., 147.

60 Matejka and Pomorska, *Readings in Russian Poetics*, 38.
Hermeneutical Phenomenology

With his approach to hermeneutical phenomenology, Ricoeur provides my general philosophical grounding. Ricoeur developed this type of phenomenology as a way of circumventing Edmund Husserl's German idealism-driven, radically anti-empirical version of phenomenology, while simultaneously reaffirming the mutual dependency of the two disciplines. 61 Husserl instead thought that it was possible to use *epoché* or suspension of judgment to bracket away one's biases until all that remained was the ideal expression of the form. 62 Hermeneutical phenomenology uses the *epoché* in a way that is compatible with a concept from hermeneutics, distantiation. Distantiation is the gap between an experience and the textual or symbolic representation of an experience. 63 Experience is key because every question about being is a question about the meaning of being; 64 every recollection of experience is an attempt to understand what an experience meant. In ethical dilemmas, where understanding the meaning of an experience not only contextualizes past actions and shapes identity, but also influences future decisions, distantiation is particularly important; in the case of virtue ethics, it helps to calibrate the mean of virtue in relationship to potential vices. Ultimately, uniting distantiation with *epoché* merges the "belonging-to" of hermeneutics with the "historically lived" of phenomenology to create the self as living text based on the ongoing interpretation of meaning. 65 The critical aspect of Ricoeur's hermeneutical phenomenology relevant here is that

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61 Ricoeur, “Phenomenology and Hermeneutics,” 85.


63 Ricoeur, *From Text to Action*, trans. Blamey and Thompson, 75.

64 Ricoeur, “Phenomenology and Hermeneutics,” 96.

65 Ibid., 97.
although there is no one right way to read a living text, it is wrong to read inauthentically in light of one's own experiences. Perhaps, the most powerful tool Ricoeur had for making meaning through text, and the one most relevant to this project, is narrative.

_Narrative Theory_

People, societies, and cultures use the narrative form to transmit information, ethics, and meaning. A narrative is a discrete discursive account with beginning, middle, and end, with definite actors, occurring in a place, across a span of time. Continental philosopher Anthony Paul Kerby describes a narrative as being composed of a series of discrete acts, occurring contingently, arranged together in a process called emplotment.\(^{66}\) Plot is something meaningful that happens to both the narrative structure and the characters, mutually informing both.\(^ {67}\) Bernard Dauenhauer, philosopher of phenomenology, and David Pellauer, scholar of Ricoeur's work, together summarize that an identity narrative is a specific type of narrative, a story that elevates a fictional character to the status of person when that character is seen responding to another character's needs with intent and consistency.\(^{68}\) The same holds true for people in the real world. People become ethical agents when they understand and respond to the needs of others in a way that displays our ethical character.

The question of identity introduces an ethical dimension; something is only capable of having an identity if it can be held culpable for its dealings with others. Librarianship already has a collective professional ethics. Even though the profession is comprised of individuals, I argue, the ethical dilemmas posed during crises count as encounters with other persons. If the library profession collectively decides that censorship is not permissible, or that racial segregation is not

\(^{66}\) Kerby, _Narrative and the Self_, 125.

\(^{67}\) Ricoeur, “Narrative Time,” 171.

\(^{68}\) Dauenhauer and Pellauer, “Paul Ricoeur,” sec. 3.4.
to be tolerated, these are shared ethical approbations. If the opposite is true, that the professional collectively takes no position or acts contrary to core values of deontological duties, then shared ethical demerits are warranted.

An identity is a construction of emplotted events that explains who a person is, including or perhaps especially ethical dilemmas the person confronts. Once formed, an identity is self-consistent in the retelling, stable over time, thereby providing the stability requirement for analogy to the *ergon*. Since it is not a metaphysical construct but a hermeneutical, narrative construct, it should be compatible with contemporary rational materialist epistemologies. As a historical construct, it is changeable; as new acts are emplotted, identity adapts. Acts are physical events that serve as the observable equivalent of declarations in discourse. An identity narrative creates a sense of continuity across a lifetime of change. A person has agency when that person's acts are consistent with his or her narrative identity. The identity narratives people make for themselves are meaningful because something about them resonates with our lived experiences. The same holds true for the identity narratives of other characters. Those narratives are compelling when the story of how they came to be as they are corresponds with what seems meaningful about their character.

*Function and Narrative Identity*

Even though I use a virtue theory framework in this project, my approach to uncovering librarianship's function is hermeneutical phenomenology. Psychologist Susann M. Laverty clarifies that despite being similar in name, hermeneutical phenomenology is distinct from phenomenological research in epistemology, ontology, and methodology.69 The purpose of phenomenology is to justify epistemological assessments about experiences, while hermeneutical

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phenomenology is a search for the meaning of experiences. Laverty also argues that hermeneutical phenomenology is a methodology instead of a method because instead of being a set formula for research, with clear pre-defined steps, it is a philosophical orientation towards gathering meaning. It is an approach, rather than a technique.70 Donald E. Polkinghorne argues from Gadamer's human sciences perspective that this approach represents a way of hearing the questions asked by meaningful experiences.71

With this distinction in mind, I have engaged in Gadamerian discourse with three historical crises in American librarianship. In each case, something about that crisis put the function of the library profession to the test. In response to those crises, dialectics of self-consciousness emerged. Using Hegel's terminology, a dialectic of self-consciousness occurs when a "particular will" becomes differentiated from the "universal will" eventually allowing an individual, or the profession, to break from the dialectic of "lordship and bondage."72 This differential is the space in which a self-identity grows out of the resolution of contradictions. When Budd described how the profession could identify the preferred future, he described it as being a dialectic of self-understanding, fueled by monistic teleological self-knowledge.73 In this project I emplot these discursively significant events into a narrative structure that solves the preferred future problem. Since the events pertain to the profession's purpose and represent acts of autonomy, the result of this emplotment is a primitive identity narrative for librarianship. I call it primitive because it is only the beginning of the creation of the narrative identity, just enough

70 Ibid., 29.


to draw preliminary conclusions. In future research, as more events are emplotted, the narrative will become more engaging. For this project, I aim only to generate the primitive narrative.

The Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutic circle is a tool used to engage in interpretive discourse with texts written by people in a different time or culture. It is one tool with many uses. In keeping with Heidegger's ontological hermeneutics, those uses include interpreting relationships of text fragment/whole text, text/reader, text/culture and text/existence. It is useful to think of each as a relationship between text, context, and back again in a way that is iterative and explicitly dialectical. The word text here should be understood both in the literal sense, words on a page, and in a more inclusive sense. To grasp that second meaning, it is important to remember that narrative theory is a subset of chronological theory and is used to understand relationships between acts over time. From that perspective, text is any disclosive phenomenon, and context is the linguistic and cultural framework needed to generate meaning from the text. In particular, I use the hermeneutic circle to relate the discourse of each historical crisis in librarianship to the context of what precipitated the crisis in community, society, or culture. I also use it to relate the sense of self-determination that arose out of those crises to the themes that drove the historical crises to occur and also to the modern autonomy crises, fueled by the commodification of knowledge.

Hermeneutics As Method in Professional Research

Other professional disciplines have begun to use hermeneutics and hermeneutical phenomenology in their research. The nursing and care professions in particular have established a clear precedent for hermeneutical research within professional practice. Leading the charge are scholars of nursing practice Valerie Fleming, Uta Gaidys, and Yvonne Robb, who clarify
differing interpretations of hermeneutics and phenomenology and propose a method for using them in qualitative research. The pertinent parts of their method are the selection of the research question, the identification of "preunderstandings", dialogic engagement with texts, and the establishment of trustworthiness.

Selecting the research question is a matter of asking a question for which an expression of meaning can be the right answer. Since the question of how to strengthen autonomy is a search for a meaningful identity, it is a good candidate. Preunderstandings are structures that researchers bring to the hermeneutic conversation. While from the perspective of the scientific method, biases are undesirable, in Gadamer's understanding, they represent the activity of a culture priming the scholar for understanding. As such, the scholar should vigorously pursue them not to eliminate them but so to use them to document the process of engagement. Dialogue with the text is a way of encoding meaning that does not presume a direct empirical understanding of the act. Instead through a disposition of openness it is an approach to understanding that comes to terms with how the text is expressed. This process is iterative, so once an understanding of the second crisis is noted, it is put into conversation with the first. The same holds true for the third. The final step is the establishing of trustworthiness. The goal here is Gadamer's fusion of horizons and is perhaps the most important step, given the active nature of the scholar in the investigative process. Fusion is accomplished by clearly identifying the criteria for proof and documenting the grounds for the findings during each iterative step in the circle.

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74 Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb, “Hermeneutic Research in Nursing.”

75 Gadamer uses the term prejudgements, which may have unintended negative connotations. Fleming, Gaidys, and Robb use pre-understandings, and since the concept conveyed is similar enough without the negative connotation, I have adopted their convention herein.
Readers should be able to recreate the process of narrative creation so that they can evaluate how meaningful are the conclusions.

Hermeneutical methodology is also finding use in additional healing professions, where it would seem that openness and receptivity to others' experiences are desirable. Margo Paterson and Joy Higgs, scholars of rehabilitation practice, support this structuring of hermeneutics as method but use the idea of the hermeneutic spiral to suggest a progressive element to the circle.\textsuperscript{76} I prefer to retain the terminology of the circle, instead of the spiral, because I do not want to promote the idea that there is an epistemic quality to the search, with subsequent circles more true than the initial ones. The understanding may get richer or more nuanced; Gadamer was insistent that no one could ever know the other, so rather than pursue an infinite regress, it would be more beneficial to strengthen the relationship. A further example of the use of hermeneutics by healing professionals is reported by Anders Lindseth and Astrid Norberg, scholars of healing practice, who used the hermeneutical circle to help nurses and physicians interpret interview texts in order to help them make ethical care decisions based on the patient's lived experiences.\textsuperscript{77}

In this project, I follow most closely Gadamer's interpretation of the circle. The process of creating meaning is forever ongoing, with each iteration of the process leading to new understanding. Even though the process of recreation is endless, the window of time for investigation cannot be. With that in mind, Jonas Debesay, Dagfinn Nåden, and Åshild Slettebø, scholars of medical practice, in their essay about how to close the hermeneutical circle, note that some interpretations must be considered more plausible than others. Those built on philosophical rigor are more likely to be persuasive than those constructed using hermeneutics as though it

\textsuperscript{76} Paterson and Higgs, “Using Hermeneutics as a Qualitative Research Approach in Professional Practice,” 342.

\textsuperscript{77} Lindseth and Norberg, “A Phenomenological Hermeneutical Method for Researching Lived Experience,” 147.
were only a procedural method instead of also a methodology. The circle closes when the question being asked is answered in a way that seems both meaningful and convincing.

**Criteria for Choosing Acts for Emplotment**

Using Gadamer's approach to the hermeneutical circle encourages the researcher to choose to frame the question in a way that is meaningful for the researcher. Since ultimately it is impossible to know the true nature of the conversation partner, it is important for the researcher to choose their conversation partners and frame their subsequent questions meaningfully and intentionally. Instead of choosing an arbitrary time and place, establishing it as the source of authority about the profession's purpose, a narrative approach allows honest engagement with the perspectives of several time periods, in essence treating each of the parts of an identity as worthy of dignity.

When significant acts are emplotted together, they compose a personal identity narrative, so too would significant and memorable events compose a narrative identity for the library profession. The question then becomes which memorable events to choose for the narrative; in other words, which conversation partners should I choose? The process of evaluating preunderstandings must capture this decision making process in order to justify the investigation more fully. The most important acts to the narrative are most likely the ones that lead librarians to encode their decisions into an official statement of values or ethics, because these acts left such an impression, positively or negatively, that the profession wanted to learn a perpetual ethical lesson from them. Others shaped the self-understanding of the profession in ways that were not encodable but changed the course of librarianship nonetheless. The clear sign for which to look is an event around which the discourse rose to the level of a dialectic of self-

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78 Debesay, Nåden, and Slettebø, “How Do We Close the Hermeneutic Circle?” 63.

understanding, with not just opposing sides, but opposing structural worldviews in search of reconciliation.\textsuperscript{80} I also intentionally chose three different kinds of crisis, one social, one political, and one cultural, in order to minimize the possibility that instead of finding a general function for librarianship, I was instead finding librarianship's function in response to a set kind of crisis. An argument could be made that librarianship's function is better found in times of normal operations, rather than crisis, since it is the more typical state of affairs. However, identities seem to form at times when people are forced to be their best rather than when they are in their resting state.

With those criteria in place, the next matter to consider is how to choose which narrative acts are most significant. Even limiting the search to just those acts that stimulated a dialectic, there is a long list of possibilities of significant discursive events in the history of professional librarianship. The key to this choice is referring to the original question asked. What is needed are not the most significant acts, but rather the acts that seem to be most significant for reconciling the two identities within the discipline and in so doing strengthening librarianship's autonomy. This is a significant pre-understanding as the choice of acts will have more bearing on the identity of the profession's function than any other. Since a straight line can be drawn between any two points, it is necessary to consider at least three discursive acts along with the researcher's pre-understandings. It should hold true then that events that happen earlier in a narrative should have more of an impact on identity formation than events that happen later. That skews the search for discursively significant events towards the beginning of the history of the profession.

\textsuperscript{80} The dialectic of self-understanding is a process where two opposing camps across an ethical dilemma come to a new self-understanding that leads to a resolution to the dilemma.
Chronological and Spatial Boundaries

To aid in my ability to choose acts, I must decide what the boundaries of my study should be. Spatially, I am limiting the scope to the United States only. I do this mindful of the many contributions to the development of the profession by librarians in the United Kingdom and working through the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. American librarianship has its own history, its own crises, and distinct responses to these crises, all of which amounts to the potential for a distinct narrative identity. There is also the sense that as an American researcher, my own lens has been formed by immersion in American culture, society, and politics. Straying from my intellectual milieu will make it more likely that any themes I perceive will be distorted by my unconscious biases in these areas. Confining my initial conversation partners to American crises will minimize this distortion. This is a geographic limiter, I would benefit from a chronological limiter as well.

Chronologically, I limit my consideration of librarianship's narrative identity to the point in time where a cohesive character was first possible. The best candidates for beginning of the profession's identity are the founding of the American Library Association in 1876, the founding of the School of Library Economy by Melvil Dewey at Columbia University in 1884, and the founding of the Graduate Library School at the University of Chicago in 1928. The first is the beginning of librarianship's main professional organization. As Lora Dee Garrison pointed out, the second is the first formal standardized training program for library workers, especially for women.81 Jesse H. Shera notes that the third is the first program recognizable as providing a modern professional graduate library education.82 Ultimately, to maximize the possibility of

81 Garrison, “The Tender Technicians,” 149.
82 Shera, The Foundations of Education for Librarianship, 244.
capturing significant events, the narrative should begin with the earliest origin point. To choose one of the latter two would be to color the narrative in such a way that skews the discourse towards a particular concept of what librarianship should be instead of what actually developed. Institutional, social, subscription, and free public librarians practiced the art of running libraries prior to the formation of the ALA. In addition, thought-leaders such as Charles C. Jewett, Edward Everett, George Ticknor, and William F. Poole were already shaping what it meant to be a librarian. However, it is difficult to argue that a professional collective identity arose much before 1876 when the profession began to gather. Therefore, I set the early chronological limit to the moment that was, according to Lora Dee Garrison, the point of origin of the movement that would become the modern library profession, the October meeting when 103 of the 209 known American librarians gathered in Philadelphia. The late chronological limit is the current crisis in autonomy caused by multiple disciplinary identities, but as the discourse is far from settled on that matter, and ethical or identity-related conclusions have yet to be drawn, it does not seem appropriate to include the current crisis in the process of seeking a function.

*Three Significant Acts*

With the geographical and temporal limiter in place, the way is clear to discuss the three discursively significant acts with which I chose to converse in this study: the resolution of the fiction question in the late 19th century, librarianship's nationalistic mobilization during World War I, and the struggle between supporters of the “Library Bill of Rights” and social

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83 Jewett was influential in developing the idea of the union catalogue and innovated the administration of the Boston Public Library. Edward Everett was a prime motivator behind the founding of the Boston Public Library; as president of its board for 12 years, he shaped many of the use policies that would later influence the fiction question. George Ticknor was also an early trustee at the Boston Public Library. His contribution was the plan for a circulating collection, turning the library from a reading room into the modern concept of library. William F. Poole was the second president of the American Library Association and was responsible for establishing the public library movement in Chicago, transforming it from a regional movement to a national one.

responsibility in the 1960s and early 1970s. Each of these events represents a moment in the history of the profession where it seems that dramatic circumstances compelled librarians to define the nature of their relationship with some facet of the common good. Since my purpose with this project is to promote a unity of identity and the autonomy of librarianship, it seems reasonable to examine only those events when conflict was clearly based on divergent identities and worldviews, where a decision about how best to act was required, and when the profession's highest values came to be defined.

The fiction question was the choice librarianship had to make over whether its function was to elevate individuals intellectually and morally by providing access to high culture and technical resources or whether its function was to help stabilize communities that were experiencing economic hardships and social upheavals by introducing entertaining but culturally scandalous materials into the collection. The question of nationalism during World War I was what role librarians had in promoting the war effort. Along with efforts to extend access to reading material to soldiers, many librarians also removed materials from their collection that painted the United States' enemies in a positive light. This crisis clarified the question of intellectual freedom and censorship. Finally, the contest between supporters of the “Library Bill of Rights” and the social responsibility movement focused on the question of the primacy of library neutrality. Is it more in keeping with the purpose of librarianship to center on keeping information free and unbiased, or is it more important to organize the profession in such a way as to reduce inequality and improve social conditions so that more people can make use of the available information? It seems these three crises are a good sample of narrative acts because they each dealt with the purpose of the library profession in light of the community, focused on different kinds of crisis, and in reconciling different worldviews, each rose to the level of a
dialectic. The narrative forms as some issue, be it the rise of women reading "salacious" fiction threatening the domestic ideal of the role of women in 19th century society; the zealous censorship of books, newspapers, and pamphlets by librarians during World War I; or the push by activist librarians during the Civil Rights Era to change the political stance of the library profession from neutral to partisan, forces librarians to take sides and try to resolve the crises not just by arguing the merits of their position on the crisis at hand but the merits of their identity for the library profession. Although the discourse only took place among librarians and their supporters, the results of these discourses shaped the profession's orientation towards its patrons and towards society as a whole.

Criteria for Proof

In order for hermeneutical research to be useful, it must be trustworthy. Different kinds of research have different criteria for proof. The standards for good evidence in medical research are different from those of social sciences. The standards for justified belief in philosophical arguments differ from both of these. Philosophical arguments are often judged by their soundness, which is determined by the degree to which the premises of an argument are true and support their conclusions. Not all philosophical arguments aim for the same concept of truth. Hermeneutic truth comes from possibility-disclosure. This is the condition where a new understanding is created, one that did not exist before the inquiry began. So one criterion for proof is whether the conclusions of the inquiry represent a new way of thinking about librarianship and, correspondingly, an expanded understanding of librarianship's being-in-the-world. A second criterion is the practical one. Newness alone is not sufficient to stand as proof; the disclosure must be one that promotes librarians’ sense of autonomy. If it creates a new

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85 A crucial part of trustworthiness is having no concealed pre-understandings and no undeclared agenda. It must represent its sources fairly and point out the intention of the researcher with each iteration of the hermeneutic circle.
identity narrative, but that narrative does not present a useful analogue to the ergon, it fails. If it is a reliable analogue, but it does not promote greater autonomy, it also fails. The third and final criterion for proof is that it must not only promote autonomy, but also be consistent with the traditions of both librarianship and information science. If the profession is to remain unified, autonomy must be born from the highest shared interests. Genuine unity cannot come when one of the identities is subordinate to the other. Chapter 4 contains my hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of the three crises in the history of librarianship and the resulting identity narrative and proposed function for the unified discipline.
CHAPTER 4

ENCOUNTERING THE NARRATIVE IDENTITY OF LIBRARIANSHIP

This chapter presents my hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry into librarianship’s identity narrative.¹ Specifically, I took three crises in the history of the American Library Association and examined them as discursive partners in a Gadamerian-style hermeneutical circle. Each of the three cycles adds a level of abstraction and synthesis to the inquiry.² In hermeneutical phenomenology the scholar is as much a part of the circle as is the subject under investigation. Consequently, in order to enter the circle, the person doing the investigation must disclose his or her pre-understandings about the questions being asked of the subjects, not for the purpose of confessing biases, but rather acknowledging that every question has its own history and motivation. Declaring pre-understandings helps establish the credibility of the inquiry by making these motivations and their historical location transparent. Such transparency is critical since, due to the nature of the approach, the duplication of results is not feasible.

As Chapter 3 provides a general description of how a hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry works, here I outline how I have applied the method to this particular project. The primary objective of my inquiry has been to uncover an identity narrative for librarianship, one

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¹ To clarify, I use both identity narrative and narrative identity as technical terms in this chapter. An identity narrative is a kind of narrative designed to capture the identity of a character or ethical agent. A narrative identity is an identity that has been constructed using narrative theory. Identity narrative is used when the narrative is the topic being discussed, and narrative identity is used when the identity of the narrative is the primary concern.

² The inquiry is complete and the circle exited after the three discrete events have been fully emplotted into an identity narrative.
capable of replicating the normative and persistent qualities of its *ergon*, for the sake of strengthening professional autonomy. Knowing this objective is a strong pre-understanding brought to the inquiry that not only influences the outcome of the inquiry, but also the shape that it takes. Rather than a flaw in the method, this feature is central to the usefulness of hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry. The purpose for selecting hermeneutical phenomenology instead of another method is its ability to find meaning. In this context in order to be meaningful, the identity narrative must provide a normative basis for virtue ethics.

The selection of the identity narrative as the analogue to the *ergon* was purposeful and inspired by an observation Ricoeur made about virtue ethics and narrative theory. In his 1986 essay, "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator," Ricoeur draws parallels between the capacity to build a narrative from discrete events, what he calls narrative intelligence, and the ability through *phronēsis* to build a good life. The idea behind both is the objective of "becoming the narrator of our own stories without completely becoming the author of our life." What it means to be narrators of our own lives is that that we are to take responsibility for creating what Ricoeur calls a "synthesis of the heterogeneous." By this, Ricoeur means that life happens in a series of heterogeneous or seemingly discrete and unrelated events. Our control over these events is limited, but we can control how we interpret these events. The narrative combines the discrete events and makes a meaningful whole out of them, the story of a self. As narrative intelligence is the ability to integrate past events, *phronēsis* is the capacity to make decisions in keeping with the sense of character one has cultivated. Therefore, the point of contact between an identity narrative of past events and the virtue of *phronēsis* that guides people towards their preferred

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4 Ibid., 131.

5 Ibid., 128.
future is character. The function in which I am interested comes from that common element, that narrative theme, which guided the narrative intelligence of past librarians as they shaped the identity of their profession.

The process of finding this common element involves investigating three cycles of the hermeneutical circle. Prior to entering the circle, in order to begin the process, one must disclose one's pre-understandings about the inquiry. Then, once in the circle, the purpose of the first cycle is to instill familiarity through a process of identification. Gadamer described the hermeneutic phenomenological process as a conversation, and the first step to any conversation is knowing the identity of the conversation partners.\textsuperscript{6} This process involves finding out more about the specific crises, their contexts, and the discourse between librarians that surrounded those crises and how they were resolved. Next, each crisis is related to one another and to the pre-understandings that motivated the inquiry. Once each part is related back to the whole of librarianship, the first cycle of the circle is complete. In the second cycle, the crises are elevated one level of abstraction to the position of theme.\textsuperscript{7} This second step graduates the abstraction from specific solutions for particular crises to more general statements of librarianship's function. Once identified, these themes are related to one another and to the identity of librarianship in the way that the crises were related in the first cycle. The third cycle completes the circle with a concentrated distillation of the first two cycles, from which the identity narrative emerges.

\textbf{Declaration of Pre-Understandings}

The first pre-understanding comes from the objective of the inquiry. This hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry is being conducted out of a desire to strengthen the capacity of

\textsuperscript{6} Refer to my discussion on the process in Chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{7} Theme in this context is an underlying motif that expresses the significance of a narrative rather than an explicit thesis developed by a narrator. Identifying themes is the first stage in synthesizing heterogeneous events into a narrative.
librarianship to act in accord with its highest goals. In Chapter 1, I argue that librarianship is undergoing a crisis in autonomy and assert that incorporating virtue ethics into existing professional ethics has the potential to resolve that crisis. That means, in my investigation, I looked for deliberations and actions that resemble those within virtue ethics.

Virtue ethics is a normative approach to ethics, the authority of which is predicated upon the assertion that it is morally preferable for librarians to pursue their function excellently. The term preferable is used because virtue ethics is not a transgression-centric system of ethics. The purpose of the approach is not to avoid wrongdoing, but rather to develop actively a strong, ethical character that effortlessly seeks the best course of action. Virtue ethics’ emphasis on building a strong character as a bridge between virtue and action is what facilitates autonomy. Since character is refined and demonstrated in the difficult decisions we make, I present events in the history of librarianship in which the character of the library profession was most clearly tested.

Professional virtue ethics have the potential to strengthen librarianship's autonomy in two ways. The first way it strengthens autonomy is that it promotes developing phronēsis, the virtue of being able to make good ethical choices. Therefore, possessing phronēsis should strengthen librarians' capacity to make decisions in keeping with the traditional goods of the profession, including those that are not easily quantified. I paid particular attention to the way librarianship resolved these difficult decisions since part of developing phronēsis is observing those who already have it.

The second way virtue ethics promotes autonomy is that it calls not just for the fulfillment of function, but also, as Korsgaard notes in her analysis of Aristotle's functional
argument, for doing so excellently. As with excellence in a skill, reflection and practice increase the potential for excellence in function. Librarianship has the benefit of many graduate programs in library and information science to draw upon as sources of reflection and research into what constitutes excellence of function. Likewise, libraries are communities of practice, and any of these communities that became interested in pursuing excellence of function would serve as an additional source of wisdom for the larger project. Between the two, research and practice, it may be possible to agree upon a conceptual goal on which to focus. A simple expression of the goal of those who focus on information science is to understand the uses of information and to promote technologies that facilitate the use of information. Having such clarity of goal guides research and stimulates ideas for practice, facilitating excellence. It seems likely that having a distinct conceptual goal that is similarly focused would aid librarianship's ability to act as an equal partner in determining the profession's identity and function.

My inquiry focuses on cultivating an understanding of function that is practical enough to guide research and practice. Another pre-understanding for the inquiry is that it is my position that full autonomy for the discipline cannot be achieved while it incorporates two separate orthogonal identities. Thus, my intention is to demonstrate that librarianship's ergon is something that unites it with information science, creating two complementary approaches to achieving the same function.

The choice of hermeneutical phenomenology over other methods also reveals an important set of pre-understandings as well as my position on the role of scientific inquiry in society. In order for society to be sustainably healthy, I hold, we should be at ease with establishing truth through both letters and numbers. This is based on the observation that the human species faces many different kinds of challenges and asks many different kinds of

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meaningful questions. In order to address as many of these challenges and questions as possible, it seems to makes sense to cultivate expertise in a wide variety of epistemological and methodological approaches. To do so maximizes adaptability and the potential to respond to the unknown. The Enlightenment's emphasis on empiricism and experimentation can be thought of as a corrective against the Scholastic period in Europe, which was strongly aligned with determining truth through letters. Some experts believe we are now entering an age where discovery of new knowledge will be increasingly driven by pattern recognition in enormous data sets. They observe that pattern recognition does not follow traditional hypothesis-driven research and instead is driven by computational speed and the amount and variety of data available. This is potentially a wondrous advance in humanity's ability to generate knowledge. However, it seems that researchers with an affinity for discourse promote greater adaptability when they work to capture meaning with words. This is why in this study I turn to narrative, one of the most quintessentially human technologies for capturing and conveying meaning.

While there are many potential ways to come at the idea of librarianship's function, I chose to pursue this search as a question of meaning, as in, what is the most meaningful task that librarians carry out? This also represents a pre-understanding, that the search for function is the search for the meaning given to function. Hermeneutics is the method of inquiry for determining the meaning of a historical event, while hermeneutical phenomenology is an act of co-creation between the researcher and the subject. Since my objective is to find what is meaningful about librarianship today, guided by the past, hermeneutical phenomenology became my preferred approach.

9 Curator Doug Howe and his associates have established the grounds in support of this claim in their work, “Big Data,” 47.

10 The larger the number of methodologies employed in determining librarianship's ergon, the more confidence librarians are likely to have in professional virtue ethics.
Laverty points out that both phenomenology and hermeneutical phenomenology employ an interpretive approach to ontology, and each, in its own way, is meant to be a counter balance to post-Enlightenment positivistic materialism.\textsuperscript{11} As a result, hermeneutical phenomenology would seem to be a curious choice, effectively exchanging one counter mainstream methodology for another. However, Budd demonstrates that phenomenology, when grounded by critical realism, can be a practical and effective research method for the librarianship and information science discipline.\textsuperscript{12} The hermeneutic phenomenological approach that this study employs is not hostile to naturalism or materialism. Instead, this approach acknowledges that meaning is something created by humans, rather than something discovered in nature.

The final, and perhaps most important, pre-understanding is that preference for epistemology and method are secondary to the healthy thriving of the human species. From my perspective, the choice to use the scientific method instead of fideism, for example, is because the scientific method does a better job of making predictions and solving material problems.\textsuperscript{13} Obligate good does not seem to exist, only the good of being free to pursue what we consider worth our time individually and collectively as societies and cultures. This pre-understanding unites both facets of this project: virtue ethics as an approach for determining the good and narrative as a beneficial means of expressing it. When combined, the good life is the ability to narrate the story of one's life through the choices one makes and the meaning given to those choices.

\textsuperscript{11} Laverty, 26.

\textsuperscript{12} Budd, “Phenomenological Critical Realism,” 77.

\textsuperscript{13} Fideism is the epistemological worldview that faith in supernatural revelation is the best way of explaining natural phenomena and that reason alone is incapable of explaining cosmology.
This study looks at three difficult choices the library profession made and extrapolates from those choices what story librarianship would like to tell about itself. Knowing the preferred story is the first step in exercising professional autonomy. This study, through its inquiry into the function of librarianship, proposes a story for librarianship that may be found in the resolution of its crises. The following section begins the use of the hermeneutic circle approach, marking the start of a hermeneutical conversation with the phenomena of three chosen crises.

The First Cycle

In the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, inquiry takes the form of conversation between the researcher and his or her subjects. The purpose of the circle is not to come to an empirical truth, but rather to open one's self to the self-disclosure of people from other places and times. It is an act of interpretation, mediated by the shared tradition of participants; in this case that shared tradition is librarianship in the United States. The first cycle begins the conversation introducing, as it were, the conversation partners and the subjects of the inquiry: the three crises in librarianship. Most if not all of the sources used to introduce these crises are secondary rather than primary sources. This was an intentional decision, which is in keeping with the purpose of the study. Primary historical sources are often used to establish ontological arguments about the course of events, as in, what really happened in a given place and time. This is tremendously important research, but it is not the kind of inquiry I am making here. Instead, I am concerned with the meaning that librarianship has given these crises. If a well-respected synthesis concerning one or more of these historical crises has been received by the profession as authoritative, that reception is significant. These leading synthetic texts become the hermeneutic lenses through which the profession sees the crises. To create my own analytical interpretation of
the historical crises would actually work counter to my goal of uncovering the meaning the profession has afforded to these events.

**The Fiction Question**

In his influential 1947 work of public library history, *Arsenals of a Democratic Culture*, Sidney Herbert Ditzion introduces the first crisis event, the so-called fiction question among librarians. In the late 19th century, the profession faced the humanitarian problem of what should be done about the demand for "pernicious" literature.\(^{14}\) Ditzion encourages his readers not to dismiss the concerns these librarians had, because to them the moral danger was real, and they were engaged in a struggle against distributors who were actively trying to corrupt the minds of readers.\(^{15}\) The worst possible outcome, Ditzion noted, would be if libraries came to be associated with pernicious literature, causing injury to the reputation of the public library as an institution in the community.\(^{16}\) This prospect ran counter to what Ditzion called the humanitarian ideal of librarians at the time.\(^{17}\) Librarians promoted the idea that libraries could improve the living condition of poor urban laborers.\(^{18}\) Unmarried women in particular were encouraged to use the library in the evenings as a haven from other activities in which they might be called to engage.\(^{19}\) Ditzion reports that not only was the library billed as a safe haven, it was also the place where

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\(^{14}\) For my investigation of this first event, I rely upon secondary sources, such as Ditzion’s study, that provide the historical narrative of the crisis, rather than upon primary materials. In his historical reporting on the crisis, Ditzion explains that the “pernicious” works of literature were inexpensive, widely-distributed and were considered "unsettling to the emotions of both adolescent and adult" (*Arsenals of a Democratic Culture* 102).

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 102–3.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 103.

\(^{17}\) It is important to remember that the use of the term librarians here only refers to librarians in the United States. Also, clearly, just as librarians today are not a monolithic block with identical attitudes, use of the term librarians in association with a historic ideology or identity should not imply unanimity.


\(^{19}\) Ibid.
people could go to be inspired. The idea, here, was that exposure to good literature not only improves one's intellect, but also one's moral standing as well.\textsuperscript{20} Inner city workers were an early subject for these humanitarian efforts. For this reason, the idea that libraries could become a gateway to immoral reading material was threatening to librarians. The image was explicitly counter to the self-identity they held of their profession. Certainly, they would have regarded it as dangerous for the community to believe that libraries might be corrupting young minds, but even more dangerous to the profession's sense of self would have been to admit that they might indeed be complicit in something they considered immoral.

Jesse Shera's \textit{Foundations of the Public Library} does not comment on the fiction question in the public library, but it does point out that in the rival of the public library, the circulating library, much of what circulated were "novels, tales and romances."\textsuperscript{21} Shera does speculate that the success of such light reading might have pressured public libraries to include more of it in their collections.\textsuperscript{22} The oppositional pressure, between knowing that denying people access to fiction made them less inclined to use public libraries and fearing that providing "pernicious literature" to the public risked moral turpitude, elevated the ethical dilemma to the point of a crisis.

Lora Dee Garrison, well-established historian of libraries, investigated the fiction question, in her 1979 book \textit{Apostles of Culture: The Public Library and American Society, 1876-1920}, and describes the problem as resulting from the rise of mass culture.\textsuperscript{23} In addition, she notes, a generation shift had occurred, with the younger generation being more drawn to

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\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 101–2.
\textsuperscript{21} Shera, \textit{Foundations of the Public Library}, 151.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 154.
\textsuperscript{23} Garrison, \textit{Apostles of Culture}, 67.
\end{flushleft}
imaginative fiction. The combination of the rise of mass culture and the youth market for reading material that espoused fundamentally different values than those held by the previous generation constituted a cultural level shift in morality.\textsuperscript{24} Garrison characterizes the opposition to this shift in morality by librarians as being an exercise in censorship. Typically, librarians held a predominantly upper-middle-class sensibility and thought it was their responsibility to move the public toward their idea of high culture.

As a result of the multiplication of titles available for reading, librarians set themselves up as arbiters of what reading was beneficial and what reading was harmful.\textsuperscript{25} Garrison focuses on librarians' response to the tales of Horatio Alger, whose motto, "get rich quick," was antithetical to the protestant work ethic:

As library service to children expanded, librarians became acutely aware of their responsibility to select books which would properly shape pliable young minds. The determination of criteria for book selection united librarians in a general condemnation of the Alger novels.\textsuperscript{26}

Garrison also focuses on the role of patron gender in the decision to censor materials. Much of the fiction in the late 19th century was consumed by women. The middle-class power structure had a great deal of cultural capital invested in the domesticity and subservience of women. As a result, there was a vested interest in minimizing women's exposure to fiction that promoted the liberation and autonomy of women.\textsuperscript{27} Increasing female discontent and stories with rebellious and often sexually adventuresome female protagonists amplified pre-existing concern.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 67–68.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 68–9.
\textsuperscript{26} Garrison, “Cultural Custodians of the Gilded Age,” 331.
\textsuperscript{27} Garrison, \textit{Apostles of Culture}, 70–1.
\textsuperscript{28} Garrison, “Immoral Fiction in the Late Victorian Library,” 84.
According to Jacalyn Eddy, a scholar in the field of women in the book trade, social discontent among women led to the rise of the "New Woman" and to the growing rejection of identifying with domesticity.\(^{29}\) At the same time, adding to the complexity of the problem was the ongoing feminization of librarianship itself. As librarians, women were encouraged to see themselves as nurturing servants to society, working altruistically to facilitate moral and intellectual improvement.\(^{30}\) The perception that librarianship was the occupational domain of women changed the impression the profession made on society, limiting its potential for influence.\(^{31}\) Garrison outlines the ways in which the feminization of the profession, as dictated by restrictive 19\(^{th}\) century gender norms, led librarianship to assume a "docile behavioral role" of service to other disciplines.\(^{32}\) Scholar of feminist literature Mary Biggs notes that public library activist Mary Ahern's writings were the most submissive, observing that Ahern called on librarians to abandon their individual concerns and instead live to serve their patrons.\(^{33}\) Historian of feminism Barbara E. Brand remarks on the disappointment feminist scholars experience when looking for overt signs of librarians’ resistance to the dominant gender concept assigned to women in the late 1890s, especially when compared to other feminized professions such as teaching and nursing.\(^{34}\)

In addition to questions about the role of women in society, the fiction question brought to a head the limits of a librarian's assumed responsibility as censor. Evelyn Geller states that

\[^{29}\] Eddy, “We Have Become Too Tender-Hearted,” 157.


\[^{32}\] Garrison, “The Tender Technicians,” 147.


\[^{34}\] Brand, “Librarianship and Other Female-Intensive Professions,” 401.
librarians drew a distinction between the act of the moral censor and the arbiter of good quality. In doing so, librarians were able to maintain multiple facets of their self-image that otherwise would have been incommensurable, such as the asset of being seen as politically neutral while being the arbiters of high culture. For example, they claimed, as the result of the multiplication of the number of titles, there were more books than any one person could possibly read; it was the duty of the librarian to select the best reading and suppress the rest. When quality-based censorship was utilized, it demonstrated the librarian's professional authority and expertise. Charles Johanningsmeier, scholar of late 19th century attitudes towards reading, notes that periodicals were another area of control for the censor and that the issue of how librarians sought to control their consumption was complex. Johanningsmeier asserts that librarians in the 1890s often viewed periodicals as means of luring patrons into consuming more substantive reading material, allowing their users access to lower-culture sources in the hopes of being able to engage them in moral uplift, even though this risked exposing patrons both to the "wrong" kind of reading and the "wrong" kind of readers.

As the 1881 case of Minister James P. Hubbard and the Boston Public Library illustrates, a coordinated campaign of moral outrage was required to push librarians to act as moral censors. Neutrality is one of the most central ethical precepts of librarianship, but did not seem to prevent widespread cultural elitism, provided only limited strength to resist calls for moral

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36 Ibid., 29–30.
37 Ibid., 39.
39 Ibid., 266.
censorship from the community, and did so at the price of discouraging librarians from active participation in movements, even as private citizens. What this insistence on political neutrality effected was a feminized profession that was discouraged from participating in women's rights advocacy or creating even the appearance of antipathy with that cause. This institutional acceptance of the devaluation of the work of women is a problem that librarianship has yet to resolve. By the late 1880s, librarianship was wrestling with a full crisis of how to deal with the desire to be a social institution promoting high culture, despite having a mostly populist clientele, and undergoing a partially self-imposed ethos of passivity, while exercising institutional authority by withholding access to popular reading material.

Garrison argues that what broke librarians out of this self-imposed confinement was a generational shift in library leadership.41 Librarians who grew up with the multiplication of periodicals and books and the availability of imaginative fiction were less likely to see their distribution as a moral issue. The mass market had won, and the question of the morality of fiction began to fade. By the early 20th century, "a woman librarian could comment that the truth was that the people did not thirst for elevated reading."42 Garrison further argues that the shift occurred as leading librarians realized that the economic stability of libraries required popular support from the masses, and efforts to focus on education and moral uplift did not enjoy broad popular appeal.43

Geller contrasts the generational-change view of Garrison with an argument that librarians actively transitioned from an ideology of normalcy to one of crisis. Geller describes librarians' ideology of normalcy as the view that many social conditions, even when terrible,

41 Garrison, Apostles of Culture, 88.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 89–90.
promote stability. When society proved not to be stable in light of severe economic and social unrest of the mid 1890s, librarians changed the way they viewed their role in society. Geller explains this new way of thinking about society:

The ideologies of crisis were responses not to these objective conditions but to the consciousness that they produced: the bitter strikes, new political parties, organs of expression, and modes of analysis; to the new literature and the mass media.\(^44\)

This turbulent time period gave rise to a new awareness in librarians that they had to take a greater role in maintaining the stability of society. This stability would come by promoting individuals’ sense of civic responsibility, as well as by developing stronger neutrality and a devotion to providing unrestricted reading material, thereby enabling free people to make their own decisions about what was good to read.\(^45\)

Therefore, the solution to the crisis was the ideological decision to promote autonomy and responsibility that accompany the freedom to read. By the end of the 1890s, most public libraries had adopted open shelving, allowing patrons more autonomy in choosing which materials to read.\(^46\) Instead of trying to uplift individuals, the focus turned to propagating "tolerance, equal opportunity, cultural elevation, and assimilation" for the sake of stability in society.\(^47\) As librarians turned their humanitarian efforts away from individual inner city workers, the tendency towards idealism did not entirely dissipate, instead coming into focus on "Americanizing" children and immigrants.

Assimilation into society and the dominant culture had the potential to provide stability in a way the focus on uplifting individual morals did not. Librarian Shane Hand notes that, after


\(^{45}\) Ibid., 48.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 51.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 50.
1900, this process of cultural norming had the effect of establishing "Whiteness" as the ideal quality to inculcate in both new immigrant populations and children born of non-white families. Prominent library historian Michael Harris and his then graduate student Gerard Spiegler argue that this kind of hegemonic shaping of the people into mono-culture was constructed into the very idea of the free public library. As Harris and Spiegler claim, "One reason the public library has proven so inhospitable and cold for the man on the street is that it was designed to control him and not to liberate him."  

Christine Pawley, library and information studies research fellow, pursued this theme of librarian as agent of the dominant culture in her 1998 essay, "Hegemony's Handmaid? The Library and Information Studies Curriculum from a Class Perspective." In it, she advocates that American librarians overcome their distaste for thinking in terms of class and use class analysis to resist ideological domination more effectively. Her idea is that librarianship is part of a larger effort by those in the dominant culture to evoke participation in social norms and institutions by those in other cultures. In Pawley's estimation, librarianship's moves to professionalize and to seek scientific status are signs of hegemonic influence being exerted upon the profession. Frederick Stielow, librarian and historian of libraries, points out that though the fragmented and passive nature of librarianship in the late 19th century prevented it from using coercive force to shape its cultural agenda, it did not prevent American Library Association

48 Hand, “Transmitting Whiteness,” 34.
49 Harris and Spiegler, “Everett, Ticknor and the Common Man,” 264.
50 Pawley, “Hegemony’s Handmaid?” 123.
51 Ibid., 134.
president Arthur E. Bostwick from delivering the 1908 presidential address on the topic, "The Librarian as a Censor."\textsuperscript{52}

Here, then, is the paradox of the progressive era in the history of librarianship and the resolution to the fiction question. Librarians turned away from moral uplift and towards the freedom to read autonomously. They opened the stacks, resisted moral censorship, limited their own tendencies to restrict library holdings to high-culture reading, and encouraged library use for pleasure among urban laborers, immigrants, women, and children. However, as Harris and Spiegel, Pawley, and others have suggested, the decision to do so was motivated by a desire to maintain the stability of society and the hegemonic influence of cultural elites, not by one to liberate access to literature and information. Understanding how these two impulses, to liberate and to control, are reconciled may help reveal the function and identity of librarianship. Before resolving the paradox, though, let us shift focus onto the second crisis, librarian nationalism during World War I.

\textit{American Librarians and Nationalism}

Arriving at the end of the progressive era of librarianship, World War I gave librarians a new sense of purpose.\textsuperscript{53} Garrison captures the enthusiasm with which the American Library Association participated in the war effort in a quote by librarian Burton E. Stevenson, who stated that before the war the ALA was "merely a humdrum professional organization, wrapped round with tradition, settled in its habits of thought . . . Its members were quiet, inoffensive, well-

\textsuperscript{52} Stielow, "Censorship in the Early Professionalization of American Libraries, 1876 to 1929," 46.

\textsuperscript{53} Again in this section, I rely mostly on existing syntheses that have been received as authoritative within the library and information science discipline. These syntheses do tend to be from social and cultural historians, but I judged these types of histories to be more likely to capture the lived experiences of working librarians.
behave people, cherishing the same hobby. That image of the profession changed in October of 1917 according to Garrison, when Librarian of Congress Herbert Putnam assumed responsibility for the Library War service.

The Library War Service was a fund raising campaign and a distribution network designed to bring reading materials to American soldiers participating in the war. Garrison argues that one of the reasons why library leaders were so keen on participating in the Library War Service was that it gave the leaders, predominately male, a chance to serve a male readership, instead of serving the primarily female readership of the public library. Garrison claims that the campaign was not just about working for men, but rather about increasing the standing of the profession; serving the needs of men, especially in the time of war, was deemed more important than serving those of women. Serving the fighting men of the nation meant also that librarians were being patriotic, serving the interests of their nation. The result was two-fold. First, the campaign cemented the impression that librarians were part of a nationwide profession, capable of significant coordinated action. Second, it demonstrated that librarianship could collectively respond to interests, national or otherwise. The combination also seems to mark the point at which librarianship began to develop something resembling a sense of its character. If librarians could work together to accomplish important things and could make collective judgments about what interests it should represent, then it has the basic qualities needed for character, a sense of agency and the capacity for deliberative action, and the capacity to learn from the consequences of that action.

What librarianship collectively decided to do, from what appears to be an abundance of enthusiasm for its task of supporting the interests of the United States, was to assume the duty of


55 Ibid.
institutional censor again. This time, they engaged in practices that attempted to restrict access to any materials that might support to the nation’s enemy or the enemy's culture. The key study of the American librarians’ efforts to support the war is the 1989 monograph, “An Active Instrument for Propaganda”: The American Public Library During World War I, by American library historian Wayne Wiegand. In this study, the author describes World War I as a watershed event in the history of American librarianship.56 Prior to World War I, Wiegand paints the picture that librarianship was a profession that presided over an unsettled domain. Librarians could neither dictate what people read, nor could they rely on traditional 19th century sources of intellectual authority to justify the worth of their collections.57 He gives an account of a distributed, small profession, eager to be relevant but anxious that an established canon no longer existed to ensure that the best books would be selected. When the Library War Service emerged as something that seemed to them so clearly worthwhile, librarians seized the opportunity to transcend their uncertain condition.58 The problem with transcending uncertainty is that to do so often requires one to accept a worldview of reduced complexity. Wiegand reports that once the United States entered the war, librarians began to reflect upon their collections with the national spirit of intolerance not just for pro-German material, but also any reading material that was not in absolute conformity with the war effort.59

Wiegand notes that extremism propagated easily amid fears of German spies and facilitated the commission of injustices against German-Americans and the suppression of their

56 Wiegand, An Active Instrument for Propaganda, 1.

57 Ibid., 3.

58 Ibid., 4–5.

59 Ibid., 6.
civic groups and their periodicals.\textsuperscript{60} Freedom of the press was abridged for German-language newspapers, and a Committee for Public Information (CPI) was placed in charge of getting out a positive message about the value of participating in the war effort. Public libraries were an important tool for the CPI in the distribution of pro-war propaganda.\textsuperscript{61} A specific example of this active participation in propaganda can be found in librarian Daniel F. Ring's 1983 account of the Cleveland Public Library's participation in the war effort. Ring notes the following loyalty oath that staff members were required to take:

\begin{quote}
I pledge my absolute loyalty, in thought, word and deed, to the United States of America. I pledge myself, personally and as a member of the staff of the Cleveland Public Library, to do all in my power to make the Library an instrument to help the Government in carrying on the war to defeat our enemies, Germany and Austria.\textsuperscript{62}
\end{quote}

According to Ring, in addition to displaying posters and broadsides for war effort programs, librarians were asked to examine German language newspapers and notice anything that could be of strategic value in terms of targets, such as bridges or buildings, and send them to the authorities. They also participated in censorship by removing reading material perceived as being sympathetic to the German cause and by acquiring both pro-soldier reading material and, interestingly, the anti-socialist political cartoon the \textit{Red Peril}.\textsuperscript{63} Everything Ring reports, from the amount of money raised to the dedication of the book drive and the participation in food saving programs, echoes the overviews found in the work of Garrison and Wiegand.

Archivist Caroline Daniels presents another interesting perspective on the participation in the war effort by librarians. In her article on women librarians who staffed the camp library at

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\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 88–9.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 89.
\textsuperscript{62} Ring, “Fighting for Their Hearts and Minds,” 10.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
Camp Zachary Taylor, in Lexington, Kentucky, Daniels claims that having women directly serving the reading needs of soldiers as they trained had a significant social impact for women. Not only those particular women, but all female librarians perceived a boost in their status, despite the fact that their participation was not officially acknowledged in written materials about the camp.\textsuperscript{65}

Thus far, this account of the emergence of librarian nationalism suggests librarians might have found it impossible to resist the pressure to censor. However, that proved not to be true in at least one case. In An Active Instrument for Propaganda, Wiegand gives an account of how, in the first year of American involvement in the war, the noted public library advocate and director of the Newark, New Jersey public library John Cotton Dana opposed an attempt to have materials removed from his collection by a representative of the anti-pacifist writers' group known as the Vigilantes. The representative had found success in having titles, with what they claimed to be seditious content, removed from other public libraries, but Dana refused to give his consent. Dana's objection was on the basis that "liberty of thought is a very desirable thing for the world and that library of thought can only be maintained by those who have free access to opinion."\textsuperscript{66} This view on the freedom to read is entirely consistent with that of librarians working almost a century later. Unfortunately, Dana's objection was one of the very few that rose to national attention among librarians. Wiegand concludes his monograph with the assessment that the majority of librarians seemed not only to go along with being agents of censorship and

\textsuperscript{64} Daniels, “‘The Feminine Touch Has Not Been Wanting’,” 286.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 289.

\textsuperscript{66} Wiegand, An Active Instrument for Propaganda, 96.
propaganda, but also to delight in it for the sense of purpose and status it brought. Be not overly harsh, he requests of his readers, in judging librarians of that era; war hysteria was pervasive.67

What came of the Library War Service? Writing in 1919, librarian Chalmers Hadley made clear that it was widely recognized how participating in the war effort fundamentally changed librarianship:

It seems unnecessary to speak at greater length of the library war service and what it has done. How it has given the American Library Association a new and enlarged vision of usefulness and service such as it never had before, need not be dwelt on, since all of us realize this. The A.L.A. has put its hand to the plow and cannot look back.68

Beyond this enlarged vision of usefulness, Garrison claims, the war effort changed the way women sought active participation in library leadership. She gives particular credit to Beatrice Winser, a colleague of Dana's at the Newark Public Library, for pressing Librarian of Congress Putnam in 1918 for more representation from women in camp libraries and at the Library War Service headquarters.69 After the war ended, the momentum librarianship experienced failed to continue into the so-called "Enlarged Program." According to historian of American higher education Arthur P. Young, that program was intended to centralize librarianship around the American Library Association, to establish new standards for adult services, and to standardize education for librarianship with a certificate program.70 The process collapsed due to differing visions of the program, resistance from the Special Library Association, and a lack of ready funds for the effort.71 According to Garrison, after 1920, librarianship retreated into its traditional

67 Ibid., 110–1.
69 Garrison, Apostles of Culture, 221.
71 Ibid., 202.
role, providing a "generalist collection of books, chiefly fiction, read by middle class patrons, chiefly women."  

What ultimately changed was not the power, status, or mission of librarians, but rather their awareness of the ethical significance of censorship and the value of intellectual freedom. In her article in the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Manual, librarian and freedom of speech advocate Judith F. Krug stresses the fact that freedom to read and intellectual freedom have not always been core values for the library profession. Their significance to the profession had to be learned, and experience often is the most influential teacher. It was only the almost universal failure of librarians during World War I to defend the freedom of individuals to read the material of their choosing that provided the experience by which to judge the question of censoring materials for service to state. That ethical awareness began to emerge in the late 1930s. The “Library's Bill of Rights,” a document that preceded the current “Library Bill of Rights,” was adopted in 1939. If the Library War Service and the collective response to the war effort moved librarianship towards developing a distinct character, the failure to defend intellectual freedom and subsequent reflection on that failure may be considered the first steps at developing a self-reflective phronēsis.

**Social Responsibility vs. the “Library Bill of Rights”**

The final crisis under investigation here arose during the civil rights era in the United States, in the 1960s and 1970s. The issue at the core of the crisis was a classic ethical dilemma: how should librarians choose between two goods that appear to be incongruent? The first good

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74 What distinguishes the sources used in this section from the previous two is that it provoked a more traditional
was the principle central to the “Library Bill of Rights,” the neutrality of the library profession. The second was librarians' commitment to take responsibility for improving the conditions necessary for all members of society to make use of library resources. Neutrality manifests primarily through collection development, with the intention to manage collections that do not privilege any single interpretation of events or ideas by fiat over others. It also manifests political neutrality, the decision to disengage from conflicts in the community that do not explicitly involve the production or distribution of library services. Those who would argue for prioritizing social responsibility are skeptical about the authenticity of neutrality claims. Neutrality they would argue too often conceals tacit support of the dominant worldview, be that cultural, political, or scholarly.

The leading voice on the history of this conflict is scholar of librarianship and intellectual freedom Toni Samek, who wrote the 2001 book, Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility in American Librarianship, 1967-1974. Samek argues that 1967 was an important year for supporters of social responsibility due to two events. The first event occurred during the ALA annual conference when a group of librarian peace activists protested a pro-war speech. The second was when Harold Taylor, president of Sarah Lawrence College, from 1949 - 1955, and friend and follower of John Dewey, spoke at the Mid-Atlantic regional conference, presenting an argument for the necessity of socially responsible librarianship and the importance of deconstructing the supposed norm of middle class values. These two events signaled a crossover among activist librarians, from criticism to coordinated response.

dialogue. Instead of being played out across decades or generations of librarians, this crisis was resolved at least to the point of a functional cease-fire in just a few years, possibly because the dialectic was so well defined. Again priority is given to synthetic sources that have been received by the profession, but more primary material is presented in order to capture the feel of the discourse.

75 Samek, Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, xxi.
In the next year, two reform groups emerged from within the American Library Association. The first was the Organizing Committee for ALA Round Table on Social Responsibilities of Libraries, and the second was the Congress for Change, which consisted mostly of new librarians and library students. The Organizing Committee advanced a social-justice-based agenda, steering discussion to librarianship and the rights of women, minority groups, and intellectual freedom. Samek points out that the Organizing Committee was directly responsible for the creation of the influential task force on intellectual freedom. The process of pressing for reforms went as far as the development of the Activities Committee for New Directions for ALA (ACONDA). Library historian Douglas Raber points out that in addition to the social responsibility aims of ACONDA, a second purpose was to restructure the American Library Association's decision-making structure in order to make it more democratic. In response to a ten-hour meeting at the Detroit conference to discuss ACONDA, past ALA vice-president Hoyt R. Galvin expressed the belief that those interested in turning the American Library Association into a social activist group were a small minority of the general membership. He reflected back to the generation of librarians in the 1930s, most notably library innovator Ralph Shaw and theorist of librarianship Jesse Shera, who also agitated for reform and, though bright and motivated, suffered from the same lack of experience.

Galvin was not the only one who was concerned about the lack of experience of the reformers. One time director of the Graduate School of Library Science at the University of Minnesota David Berninghausen wrote an article in 1972 for Library Journal that codified the

76 Ibid., xxii.
77 Ibid.
78 Raber, “ACONDA and ANACONDA,” 675.
ethical dilemma librarianship faced. It was titled, "Antithesis in Librarianship: Social Responsibility vs. The Library Bill of Rights." In it, Berninghausen made his case for why, although many of the issues raised by the social responsibility reformers were pivotal for the future of humanity, "it is not the purpose of the ALA to take position as to how men must resolve them." Berninghausen says librarians who devote their personal time to these causes should not have to worry about their jobs. He dismisses claims that the library press was being unfair by not publishing texts with particular political or social views. His central concern is that if the social responsibility reformers were able to transform the American Library Association into an activist body, it would discredit the authority of librarianship as a neutral organizer of information. He further disputes the idea that it is possible to know the best social course of action to take through superficial intuition, so any stance that activist librarians might take could do more harm than good. Finally, he claims, any time librarians take for resolving social issues is time taken away from the protection of free access to information, from the ability to organize information effectively, and from the satisfaction of all other laws of the United States and policies of the American Library Association.

The following year, Library Journal published a rebuttal piece of sorts called, "Social Responsibility and the Library Bill of Rights: The Berninghausen Debates." In it, a collection of librarians presents a variety of positions that debunked Berninghausen's arguments, including: Robert Wedgeworth's assertion that social responsibility is not a new concept in librarianship, relating it back to the responsibility librarians assumed to Americanize new immigrants and children; William Summers opposing the idea that librarians were capable of practical neutrality;

80 Berninghausen, “Antithesis in Librarianship,” 3675.

81 Ibid., 3675–6. Berninghausen's emphasis on prioritizing the rule of law and professional code over direct action for social reform seems to reveal his belief that the actions of activist librarians were criminal and unethical in nature.
Betty-Carl Sellen observing that the idea of neutrality includes the social responsibility to balance out injustices in collection policies; Patricia Glass Schumann asking if libraries are part of society or not? And if so, are they not responsible for addressing policies that effect society as a whole? Despite the general opposition to Berninghausen's view of the role of neutrality, according to Samek, momentum for the reformer's position had been lost, and librarianship retained its focus on neutrality.

By 1973, the war in Viet Nam was ending and with it the political energy for mass social reform. Samek concludes:

ALA exercised moral, intellectual, and organizational dominance over its membership. But because ALA's development and expansion depended upon a dynamic relationship with other groups, the establishment made compromises when faced with minor calls for reform.

When pressed for more than minor reform, Samek claims, the American Library Association exerted its dominance and bureaucratic nature to delay and to defuse calls for change. Despite the merits of the arguments rebutting Berninghausen, Samek observes, the positions of those on what would come to be called the Social Responsibilities Round Table were too ideologically driven for the rank and file librarian. Berninghausen had instilled enough fear of social, financial, and legal repercussions for members to brook any substantive change. Boris Raymond, a scholar of Soviet librarianship, notes that despite the failure of ACONDA to

83 Samek, Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, xxiv.
84 Ibid., 121.
85 Ibid., 127.
86 Ibid.
generate democratic reforms in the American Library Association, a legacy of the effort was the ability of racial and sexual orientation minorities within the American Library Association to discuss their interests and concerns more openly.\textsuperscript{88}

The Second Cycle

In connecting these three crises with one another and with the original preconditions set out in this chapter, I perceived a clear pattern of themes beginning to emerge. By exploring these themes, I draw out a level of abstraction from the particular details of each crisis, in order to begin shaping a narrative in the third cycle. Themes are conceptual undercurrents that form connections between the three crises. Each theme relates to some facet of the pre-understandings for the study pertaining either to strengthening the professional autonomy of librarianship, to locating the function of the profession, or to understanding some aspect of its identity narrative. I try to keep the expansiveness of these themes to a minimum, but as they are intended to be abstractions from the particular to the general, some degree of it is unavoidable.

The first theme is the consistent reconciliation of idealism and pragmatism. In each case, even though the crises conclude, neither set of disputants ever score a complete victory. In the fiction question crisis, the impulse to exercise humanitarian moral uplift and paternalistic control over patrons' reading habits never fully gave way to the pragmatic approach, the idea that collecting popular reading material would encourage frequent use of the library by patrons. Moral censorship, initiated from the community in the form of book challenges, is still an ongoing concern. While the standard ethic for librarianship is to promote intellectual freedom, if a public library's moral standards differ too greatly from those of its community, it runs the risk of losing the community's funding support. From the question of library nationalism, even

\textsuperscript{88} As reported by Raymond, “ACONDA and ANACONDA Revisited,” 360.
though librarianship came to reject censorship of intellectual content of material resoundingly, it is impossible to ignore the fact that, as scholars of information law and policy Paul Jaeger and others point out, library operation changed the day the USA PATRIOT Act passed.\textsuperscript{89} Contemporary librarians actively opposes the federal government's efforts to give itself broad powers to observe patron behavior, but for the most part this opposition takes the form of challenging the specific act, rather than questioning the legitimacy of a government that would pass such an act. I believe the activist librarians of the 1970s, so accustomed to questioning the validity of government would have been more willing to question merits of government. It seems that this measured response reveals, in part, the legacy of library neutrality. Librarians, even when they are explicitly forced to be political, tend not to call upon the force of ideological alone, but ideology combined with pragmatism.

The second theme that emerges is that librarianship seems to see itself consistently as an agent of good. In each crisis in librarianship, both sides of the dispute advocated that they were trying to improve the human condition in some way. The policies of both the moral uplifters and the progressive era autonomists who favored promoting Americanization were actively engaged in working to enact their concept of the public good. Both were still exhibiting a form of the library faith, which as described by philosopher of librarianship and social justice Kathleen de la Peña McCook is the belief that exposing people to reading, any kind of reading, will improve their quality of life.\textsuperscript{90} Both the idealist and pragmatist elements in each crisis all seem to agree that getting people to where they can access reading and other cultural material is a good thing, and will improve lives.


\textsuperscript{90} McCook, “The First Virtual Reality,” 626.
In the question of library nationalism, the desire to serve the state was an impulse to do good by aiding in the war effort. That it also increased the status of the library profession and gave clarity of purpose did not detract from its status as an act with good intent. Unfortunately surrendering autonomy to patriotism as a means of deriving purpose can lead down the road to totalitarianism. John Cotton Dana and ethical reformers afterward who argued for the moral superiority of messy, complicated intellectual freedom were likewise convinced of their standing as agents of the good. Those same people who fought for the “Library Bill of Rights” and the “Freedom to Read Statement” in the 1930s through 1950s are the ones who opposed extending the responsibility of librarianship to solve social problems that prevent unfettered access to information in the 1970s. It seems that they were continuing to fight for what they chose as the essential good of librarianship; the same holds true for activist librarians who took a stand against what they considered oppressive social, political, and cultural structures acting as abridgements to intellectual freedom. Librarians do good, and any understanding of their function and identity must accommodate this alignment toward the good.

The final theme is that of insecurity of authority over the profession's intellectual and material domains. Each crisis seemed to be precipitated by an abridgement in librarians' ability to conduct the affairs of libraries in the way they chose. I do not mean this as a criticism of the profession, only as recognition that the status of both the profession and the discipline is a persistent concern. From the domestic and nurturing role that industrial 19th century society cast women, what choice did librarians have but to become as Garrison called them, tender technicians, or as Shera did, handmaidens of the learned world? When library use is completely voluntary, how could librarians not develop soft power to try to encourage visits to reading rooms and to increase circulation?
This concept of soft power seems to be the key to understanding why librarianship's identity narrative developed as it did. Soft power is the power to persuade rather than coerce. Joseph S. Nye, political scientist and coiner of the term soft power considered it to be a form of seduction, saying, "Seduction is always more effective than coercion, and many values like democracy, human rights, and individual opportunities are deeply seductive." It cannot be a coincidence that librarians came to favor democracy, individual opportunities, and human rights; rather, it was a necessary means of compensating for the lack of hard power. The library activists caught the resistance they did not just because they were of a different generation, but because they sought to exchange librarianship's advances in using soft power for the hard power of active protest and non-violent demonstration against what they perceived as injustices. The insecurity experienced by the profession is an extension of this devotion to soft power. No matter how good one becomes at using soft power, one's power remains soft. It relies on the cooperative actions of others, and that is a vulnerable position. Librarians in the Library War Service made the most of their association with the hardest of hard power, military force. Librarians at the time seemed to participate in the belief in the superiority of what was perceived as being male work and sought to persuade the males in charge of making war that access to reading material could help lead the nation to victory. Had war fighters come to consistently value the profession after the war was over, librarians might have felt further legitimized by men and that legitimization could have lead to a significant shift in the type of power librarians at the time were willing to employ. When that did not work, it only makes sense that the pendulum swung far in the other direction, when librarianship redoubled its efforts to develop soft power by encoding the values promoted by soft power into the normative ethical authority that is "Library Bill of Rights" and later the "Freedom to Read Statement."

91 Nye, Soft Power, x.
Librarian activists did not appear to pursue soft power or approval from cultural elites, but after their bid to reform the American Library Association failed, the Social Responsibilities Round Table continued to exist, proving that when need be, librarian activists can pragmatically function outside their element and within bureaucracy. While it is impossible to know the minds of the rank and file librarians during the last historical crisis, by their inaction, they looked to defer to existing ethical tradition rather than risk alienating their cultural, social, and political partners. Soft power works, but it comes at the price of needing a stable environment in order to be effective. Part of the way that librarianship overcomes its sense of instability, it would seem, is by promoting stability in the nation, society, and culture that it serves.

The Third Cycle

This third cycle serves the purpose of concentrating and distilling the conversations with the individual crises, the abstracted themes, and the pre-understandings into a single narrative whole through the process of emplotment. Through listening to these three themes, I perceived librarianship to be a profession that seeks to do good, is talented at balancing idealism and pragmatism, and is excellent at exercising soft power to achieve its goals, while being unable to achieve a sense of security despite their proficiencies. Fusing these themes together, along with the question "what is the function of librarianship?" presented me with the following narrative. As with developing a moral character, the first step is intent. With its character, librarianship seeks the best way to do good in the world. In order to do good, librarianship needs to bring people to reading material. To do that, librarianship requires stability because without stability, soft power is less influential. Elements of this stability include cultural stability, social stability, and stability in the authority of state.
Through trial and error, the profession has found that the best way to maintain that stability is by balancing idealism with pragmatism, which results in a pragmatic ideal of promoting individuals’ maximum, unfettered freedom to read, to think, and to pursue their individual conceptions of happiness. The understanding is that happy people do not start revolutions. Revolutions destroy stability and, thus, the librarian's ability to do good. This goal of stability is both selfish and altruistic. It is altruistic because of the basic library faith that reading, any reading, is good. It is altruistic because it promotes the pursuit of personal freedom and happiness. It is selfish because seeking stability is ultimately a means of making the best use of soft power, the only power available to librarians. The identity narrative of librarianship, and by analogy its function, is that librarianship is the profession that promotes stability in society specifically by encouraging human happiness through unfettered access to human knowledge and creative textual, sensual, and symbolic expressions. I call this function stability-happiness. By embracing this morally ambiguous dual function as an analogue for the ergon of librarianship, librarians may be able to develop a normative form of professional virtue ethics capable of resolving the current crisis in autonomy and of reconciling the division between librarianship and information science.

Summary

In this chapter I engage in a hermeneutic phenomenological conversation with three crises in the history of librarianship: the fiction question, the problem of librarianship's nationalism during World War I, and the contention between supporters of the "Library Bill of Rights" and those of social responsibility. I found that each crisis begins when some ideological vision about the function of librarianship comes into conflict with a practical limit to librarians' ability to carry out that vision. As the conflict deepens, a competing worldview arises among
other librarians leading that second group to advocate for a more pragmatic position. The two worldviews form a dialectic, and out of the back and forth of this dialectic comes a clearer understanding of librarianship's function and identity. Over the course of the hermeneutic phenomenological conversations, I identified three themes common to each crises. The first of these themes was that both sides of the ideology/pragmatism divide sought to do good. By doing good I mean actively working to improve the human condition. The competition between the opposing worldviews in librarianship was a competition in vision not for the sake of dominance, but rather for how the profession could do the most good. This leads to the second theme, that librarianship is very good at reconciling idealism and pragmatism in such a way that makes the profession stronger. The final theme is that despite the good the profession does, and despite the skill with which it has traditionally dealt with identity crises, each crisis is the result of trying to overcome some element of insecurity librarianship perceives regarding its standing in society. This insecurity is largely the result of the persistent and systematic devaluing of the work of women, and the need to remedy that discrepancy by embracing soft power. This insecurity points to another finding, that despite an emphasis on improving the human condition, librarians enjoy very little direct influence over social, cultural, or political institutions. The story of librarianship's function emerges from this dissonance between altruism and lack of hard power. Librarianship's power is the soft power of persuasion, so in order to do good, librarians must be able to persuade people that their idea of the good is worthwhile. It is easier to persuade others of something one believes oneself. In this case, that belief is in the goodness of the library faith.92 In Chapter 5, I discuss the theoretical, practical, and moral implications of librarianship's having stability-happiness as a function.

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92 As mentioned in Chapter 1, the library faith is the tacit belief that the human condition is made better by the act of reading texts or otherwise taking in recorded expressions of human cleverness and creativity.
CHAPTER 5
TOWARD RESOLVING LIBRARIANSHIP'S AUTONOMY CRISIS

The previous chapter comprised a hermeneutical phenomenological inquiry into librarianship's function. The purpose of that inquiry was to arrive at an identity narrative that could serve as an analogue to the profession's ergon.1 The inquiry resulted in a story of librarianship being the profession that generates stability-happiness. With this chapter, I consider the implication of the stability-happiness function. These implications include determining what stability-happiness means for the character of librarianship, for resolving the autonomy crisis, and how it might be used to address some of the problems that have persisted throughout the course of the profession. Discovering librarianship's function is only the first step in resolving the autonomy crisis, but I will make the case that it is an essential step.

In order to understand the implications of stability-happiness, consider the good work carried out by librarianship. When one thinks of the good done by librarians, what likely comes to mind is making knowledge and cultural expressions findable and accessible. This material and intellectual domain is unique to the library and information science discipline and is indispensable to the daily operation of libraries, but I argue it is not how librarians improve the

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1 Any mention of librarianship's ergon in this chapter is a reference to the identity narrative uncovered in Chapter 4. The identity narrative is an ergon-analogue, rather than a true metaphysically-derived ergon, but to avoid confusion, I continue to use the term ergon herein when discussing that which provides the normative force for virtue ethics.
human condition. Instead, librarians improve the human condition by persuading people that seeking knowledge matters and is good. Reading for pleasure matters and is good. Listening to music and watching movies matter and are good. The highest of these goods that one can learn in a library is information literacy, the ability to reason critically, to locate and evaluate sources, to understand how and why people use knowledge. In justification of labeling information literacy as inherently good, scholar of human organization and development Jeremy J. Shapiro and information specialist Shelley K. Hughes argue that information literacy is a new liberal art. To support their point, they brilliantly use a passage from 18th century political philosopher Nicolas de Condorcet's 1795 masterwork, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*: "'Nature has joined together indissolubly the progress of knowledge and that of liberty, virtue, and respect for the natural rights of man,' leading inevitably to humanity's 'perfection' and 'happiness.'" Condorcet wrote *Sketch* in Paris, during the Terror. It is very much his petitionary prayer to human nature to allow reason to do its work and guide humanity towards prosperity, issued while witnessing his peers' rising tendency to factionalize and gleefully execute their rivals. Condorcet died tragically by poison in prison awaiting trial, so one does not use his work to support one's own ideas about freedom lightly. Shapiro and Hughes seem to realize that, and take his inclusion seriously. In arguing that information literacy is a liberal art, they mean liberal in the fullest sense. Information literacy is liberative, and from such liberation comes happiness. Information literacy, in that sense, is the highest good librarians can offer to humanity; the belief that knowledge is freedom, and freedom is happiness. This formula is perhaps the fullest expression of the library faith.

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2 A library containing every volume ever scribed, printed, or born digitally, perfectly catalogued, impeccably arranged, and instantly findable would be useless in a society contemptuous of reading.

3 Shapiro and Hughes, “Information Literacy as a Liberal Art?” 31.
This way of thinking is bound up in the intellectual traditions of the Enlightenment. In turning away from moral uplift, librarianship turned towards the Enlightenment, with its own form of secular uplift, progress. Condorcet's *Sketch* is on the progress of the human mind and how it relates to the progress of human institutions of culture and society. Knowledge only leads to freedom if it is ignorance that enslaves us. Freedom only leads to happiness if it is our natural state to be happy when released from ignorance. Both of these ideas are based on the ideology of progress, the belief that it is possible to improve humanity and the world, particularly through the domination of nature and the accelerating growth of technological capabilities. A classic critique of the idea of progress is Jacques Ellul's 1962 summary of his philosophy of technology and society, "The Technological Order." Ellul decouples progress from happiness, and happiness from freedom, claiming:

> Modern man's state of mind is completely dominated by technical values, and his goals are represented only by such progress and happiness as is to be achieved through techniques. Modern man in choosing is already incorporated within the technical process and modified in his nature by it. He is no longer in his traditional state of freedom with respect to judgment and choice.  

So instead of progress being a mechanism for improving the human condition, the technical milieu merely replaced nature as humanity's master, and in doing so replaced the devotion to ends with the devotion to means. The pursuit of progress condemns a person to constant innovation, so much so that innovation becomes the point, rather than an approach to accomplishing something more personally significant. In order to unite librarianship's intellectual and material domain with its liberative ideology, the profession relies on the progress concept's causal ability to link knowledge, freedom, and happiness. Belief in progress requires the sense

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5 Ibid., 398.
that the institutions in our lives are working towards a better state of being, and that this process is inevitable thanks to the presumed cumulative nature of science and technology. People who share this ideology voluntarily give power to these cultural, social, and political institutions because those are the mechanisms through which progress is generated. Even though the library profession routinely challenges individual injustices initiated by these institutions, I argue that librarianship is still deeply invested in maintaining stability in these institutions so that they can continue the good work of human progress. It is for this reason that I consider the function of librarianship to be the generation of not happiness and not stability, but stability-happiness.⁶

Before discussing how the stability-happiness can be used as a normative foundation for a system of professional virtue ethics, it seems important to discuss the moral footing of librarianship's function. To do that, I must address the reason why the function of librarianship is predicated upon promoting stability in social, cultural, and political structures. After that moral footing is established, I refocus this chapter on to the application of the stability-happiness to virtue ethics. That application process is broken down into three steps. First, it considers the relationship between the stability-happiness and the development of *phronēsis*. This first step is the one most responsible for addressing librarianship's autonomy problem. The second step builds off the conclusions of the first, and offers speculation and invites dialogue about what would count as the virtues in a system of professional virtue ethics. The third step speculates on *eudaimonia* for librarianship. This third step functions as conclusion to the work and extends a final argument for the value of using a character-based approach to reconcile the two identities in

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⁶ Neither half of the stability-happiness task alone is sufficient to promote the good. Promoting stability without happiness results in disinterested patrons. Happiness without stability limits the profession's ability to use soft power to maintain authority over the profession's intellectual domain.
the discipline and resolve the crisis in professional autonomy. The chapter closes with a
discussion of further avenues for research.

The Moral Implications of Stability-Happiness

What are the moral implications of the stability-happiness function? Stability is a neutral
word, one that I use for its connotations of biological equilibrium. It is something natural,
perhaps even beneficial. However, when considering stability in the context of human lives,
supporting stability amounts to the encouraging library patrons to participate voluntarily in the
dominant social order, the dominant culture, and the central authority of state. It is clear from the
body of ethical documents and value statements of the American Library Association that
librarians value personal liberty and intellectual freedom. The question then is how can a
profession be dedicated to both freedom and assimilation? To demonstrate the contradiction
better, let us consider a problem first raised in the introduction, that of the underrepresentation of
racial minorities in the librarianship and information science discipline.

Denise Adkins, a scholar of library outreach to underserved populations, and Isabel
Espinal, an American studies scholar, reported in 2004 that in the United States, MLIS students
of Anglo-European descent outnumbered students of all other racial or ethnic backgrounds by a
ratio of nine to one; Anglo-European professors of librarianship and information science
outnumbered their peers in a four to one ratio despite making up only 64% of the population.7 In
a prior, influential article on the subject of diversity in librarianship, Kathleen de la Peña
McCork and Paula Geist caution that despite the desire for multicultural sensitivity, as long as
people from minority backgrounds are underrepresented in professional librarianship, patrons

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7 Adkins and Espinal, “The Diversity Mandate,” 53.
from diverse backgrounds will not find their needs adequately served by libraries. They use the blunt expression "overwhelmingly white" to describe the profession's diversity situation in the early 1990s, an assessment that is echoed by Adkins and Espinal.

Writing fourteen years after McCook and Geist, Paul Jaeger a scholar of diversity in librarianship and information science and Renee Franklin an educator of media specialists confirm that despite professional awareness of the problem and coordinated action, the lack of diversity persists. As a means of increasing the number of people from underrepresented backgrounds in librarianship they advocate for first increasing racial diversity among doctoral students in the library and information science discipline. Their idea is that increasing the number of doctoral students from minority backgrounds today will mean a more diverse LIS faculty tomorrow. A more diverse faculty would be more capable of recruiting minorities into the profession, who will in turn be better at offering culturally diverse services and drawing in a more diverse range of patrons. The fact that they argue for a multi-part plan to create a feedback system that is amenable to racial inclusion is necessary to increase representation of people from minority backgrounds suggests that there is a feedback system already in place that in not amenable to inclusiveness. The reason I am stressing the ongoing lack of racial diversity in librarianship and education for librarianship is this: librarians know that the profession has a diversity problem, want to correct that problem, actively seek creative ways to overcome it, and yet the lack of diversity persists. I offer this persistence as proof that there is a stability

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8 De la Peña McCook and Geist, “Diversity Deferred,” 35.
11 Ibid., 23.
mechanism built into the way librarianship functions that is biased towards dominant cultural institutions. This function resists efforts to become less Anglo-Eurocentric in the same way that it resisted library activism in the 1970s. My point here is that even though librarianship is a profession that is officially politically neutral, it holds the classically left-liberal core values of social responsibility, diversity, and the public good and functions as a fundamentally conservative instrument for dominant cultural and social institutions. This is especially troubling due to the fact that access to physical libraries, with their wide variety of means for accessing knowledge and cultural products, can be a critical learning and experiential tool for people who might otherwise have access to only a fraction of that material. As a result of uncovering librarianship's identity narrative, it becomes clear that addressing the problem of racial underrepresentation is not just a matter of being more sensitive to the issue, but instead requires a plan for overcoming, or perhaps gaming, the profession's tacit preference for stability.

Initially, this conclusion seems to echo those provided by Michael Harris' revisionist social history and of Christine Pawley's cultural criticism, but my conclusion is made distinct by the emphasis on the altruistic intent of the profession. I argue that librarianship's stability-happiness function did not evolve despite the good intentions of librarians, but rather because of them. Addressing unwanted behavior in the profession then is not a matter of identifying and solving a transgression, but rather reinterpreting the conservative aspects of the function. Librarianship's function does not work by generating false-consciousness, but rather by trying to promote the relationship between knowledge, freedom, and happiness. If I am correct about librarianship's function, instead of classifying the ideology of progress as a transgression that

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12 Engles, “Engels to Franz Mehring,” paragraph 4. False-consciousness is the Marxist explanatory theory of why workers do not always revolt despite difficult living conditions. They are given an ideology of competition through acquisition and artificial goals that line up with the interests of capital holders. This makes workers believe that the path to a good life is in supporting the existing economic system.
must be corrected, or as a tool of a particular social class or cultural interest, it will be more fruitful to use *phronēsis* and the virtues of librarianship to shape that ideology to accomplish our professional goals.

At this point, it may seem that I am saying it is not helpful to think of the lack of racial diversity in library and information science as a transgression, but that is not the case. Any discriminatory practice based on ignorance is hurtful, shortsighted, and within a transgressive ethical system, morally wrong. I am, however, requesting that the reader temporarily bracket the transgressive nature of this and other possible stability-related shortcomings of the library profession while in the process of constructing professional virtue ethics. These professional virtue ethics are meant only to be supplemental to existing ethics, so developing them does not displace the capacity to make ethical judgments about the moral rightness or wrongness of any action.

**Stability-Happiness and *Phronēsis***

What is the relationship between librarianship's function and the development of professional *phronēsis*? In this section I clarify that relationship, and discusses what is involved with developing professional *phronēsis*. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, *phronēsis* is the virtue of practical wisdom. In an individual, *phronēsis* develops in stages. One learns one's *telos* or *ergon* and then makes the decision to live an ethical life. Next, one cultivates a *hexis* or disposition toward developing a strong, ethical character. Once the *hexis* is in place, one is then able to engage in ethical deliberations that lead to actions. If one is fortunate, one will have access to a *phronimos* who can help evaluate how the virtues are relevant to that person's *ergon* or *telos*. Through the experience of making difficult decisions, one gains confidence that one's actions are in line with one’s virtues and are leading one closer to fulfilling one's function or purpose. After
much experience, one develops the confidence that one will decide to pursue the best course of action consistently and without difficult deliberation. Finally, through reviewing a lifetime of decisions and gauging the extent to which one has achieved one's goals, one is able to determine if one has lived a *eudaimonic* life. Some of these steps translate over to professional ethics easily and others, such as waiting for the end of life to evaluate *eudaimonia*, require some conceptual reevaluation. As a general rule, any instance that refers to an individual's character can refer to a profession's ethical corpus. Both are the sum of good and bad experiences, and wise and unwise decisions.

Before translating those developmental steps, it is important to establish a baseline relationship between the *ergon* and *phronēsis*, both abstractly and in the particular case of this study. The relationship between *ergon* and *phronēsis* can be conceived of as the relationship between what and how. The *ergon* informs one of one's task or function. It is a trait meant to be stable over a lifetime. As *eudaimonia* is an uncertain condition until after all of one's decisions have been made, the *ergon* is that which actually was one's task or function. Unlike *eudaimonia* though, the *ergon* must be known at the beginning of the process of developing virtue ethics. When the *ergon* is determined using metaphysical causality, its stability would be assured through an understanding of the qualities and substance performing the function. In the case of this study, the *ergon* is derived by developing an identity narrative. The identity narrative is also a stable trait, but unlike a trait determined by metaphysics, the identity narrative is a product of meaning given to experiences. That means that the function it conveys can change in two ways. One, the meaning given to the initially emplotted events could change due to new knowledge about the nature of those events. The new knowledge would have to be significant to realign a fully formed and reinforced identity narrative. For personal identity narratives, a successful
The course of psychotherapy is an example of an involved and difficult process by which significant early events might be reinterpreted to the degree that a new identity is formed.

The other way the narrative identity might be altered for an individual is if one's habitual responses to life events that occur later in life drastically contradict those from earlier in life. Rather than invalidate the identity narrative as a source of normative power for virtue ethics, it is stable enough to provide normative guidance without being a causal destiny. For example, if events had gone differently in the early 1970s, and ACONDA had succeeded in reforming librarianship into an activist organization, an ergon based on metaphysical causality would have to resort to outside explanations for how the profession could have changed from soft to hard power. Narrative identity on the other hand would accommodate it as a dramatic shift late in the narrative and adapt to tell a different story about librarianship's identity. It might be something along the lines of, "librarianship is an instrument of dominant cultural and social institutions except in times of revolution, when it becomes a facilitator of revolution." Of course, that did not happen and seems unlikely to happen, but the knowledge that it could happen might be a point of encouragement if the consensus finds the idea of stability-happiness too abhorrent. Identity is not destiny, but it endures and is consistent unless something acts upon it.13

In the case of this study, the ergon has been established as the stability-happiness function. Phronēsis would then be interpreted as practical knowledge of the best way to engage in both aspects of stability-happiness. What are the best decisions to make that will equally promote stability and happiness? Since librarianship has not adopted a hexis of character development, any answer must be speculative. However, the clearer the understanding of how

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13 It would be very interesting to look at other crises in the past and present of librarianship and code for how conservative of cultural, social, and political norms the profession's response was, then to see if a pattern emerged. The hermeneutical phenomenological method is powerful for generating insights, but it always makes sense to approach a problem for many different directions.
stability-happiness works one has, the better one will be able to anticipate the kinds of choices toward which phronēsis will lead. As of the current understanding, librarianship has two mechanisms of control when implementing stability-happiness: the intellectual and material domain of the library and information science discipline and its liberative ideology, including its existing ethical systems. That suggests that any significant decision will have a technical component, in Ellul's sense of having a means-based element, and an ideological component, or ends-based component. This is an interesting parallel with what John M. Budd called for when he wrote about the monistic teleology of librarianship, the knowledge of librarianship as both ends and means in a community.\textsuperscript{14} Budd means something different when he uses those terms, pointing out that each act of librarianship is performed both for the sake of the library and for the sake of the community. It is still an important insight though, as it adds a dimension to our consideration of the mechanisms that might be employed while developing phronēsis. So in addition to how might technique and ideology be used to solve problems, consider how would this decision affect both the operations of the library and the services it provides?

While the primary mechanism for practical decision-making is the ability to apply the virtues correctly to challenging situations, before turning to a question of what the virtues of librarianship might be, there is another mechanism for problem solving to consider, the use of reason to define core concepts. There lies a great deal of room for interpretation as to the best way to support stability and to promote happiness. Progress is the great method generated by the intellectual milieu of the Enlightenment, but there are clearly other intellectual milieus. Unless librarianship's identity narrative is radically re-emplotted to accommodate a shift to hard power, any concept of stability will require creating a message about the value of knowledge and

\textsuperscript{14} Budd, \textit{Self-Examination}, 230.
culture, and any version of happiness will have to lead toward individuals' freedom to pursue their interests. Within those constraints though, lay many possibilities.

This is a good opportunity to return to one of the signs of the lack of autonomy, the problem of racial diversity in librarianship and information sciences. How might knowledge of stability-happiness be reframed to promote greater inclusiveness? The point of stability is not to provide an advantage to any one culture or social structure; it is to make sure that there is an audience for the library faith. The expanded definition of the library faith is the use of information literacy to promote knowledge, freedom, and happiness. So any culture or social structure that buys into that message will find librarianship to be an enthusiastic partner in stabilizing that culture or structure. There are no ready answers to one of the most difficult questions in the discipline, but it might be useful to ask how can the profession promote the expanded library faith in ways designed appeal more to a particular racial or ethnic group? If it were accepted that the profession is not rejecting other cultures but instead protecting its key source of stability, that understanding seems likely to change the dialogue about the problem. Between existing means of encouraging diversity and taking advantage of this stability-based approach, the librarian and information science discipline could set the grounds for significant gains in diversity.

This authority to adapt how the function is interpreted is the kind of autonomy that phronēsis for librarianship would bring. It is a process of developing clear self-understanding of function, combined with knowledge of the virtues in order to promote the good that librarians do while minimizing any harm. By not moralizing any particular action, a system of professional virtue ethics frees librarians to be creative in their solutions, as long as the solution is motivated by the drive to perform librarianship's function excellently, not viciously. Even though virtue
ethics is not a transgressive system of ethics, it is not amoral. If diversity is established as a virtue that will help the profession flourish, then to fail to seek diversity is a vice. Since a virtue is often the mean between two vices, it might be possible to set diversity up as the mean between underrepresentation and cultural appropriation for example. In order for *phronēsis*, and by extension virtue ethics, to be worth pursuing, the critical task is to make sure that librarianship's virtues and vices accurately reflect both the profession's function and the concept of flourishing. No degree of refection from a *hexis* of serious devotion to ethics would compensate for questionable virtues.

**Candidate Virtues for Librarianship**

During the course of this study, I have demonstrated a willingness to engage in speculation, particularly about the narrative identity of librarianship. I did so because, ultimately, the use of hermeneutical phenomenology is a search for meaning, and I appear to be no less qualified to search for meaning than anyone who is willing to put in the time in research and reflection. Attempting to identify librarianship's virtues is a different kind of exercise. It is asserting what should and should not lead to the profession flourishing. Without both *phronēsis* and experience in making ethical decisions for libraries, I am simply not qualified to determine the profession's virtues. However, since it is an important question, I give a tentative answer here. The more virtue-like set of guidelines provided by the American Library Association are the *Core Values of Librarianship*. The full list of values are as follows in alphabetical order: Access, confidentiality/privacy, democracy, diversity, education and lifelong learning,
intellectual freedom, preservation, the public good, professionalism, service, and social responsibility.15

The difficulty with using this list lies in deciding what constitutes excellence in each of these, since the virtue comes not just in the performance of trait, but its excellent performance. Even the most abstract of these traits is not impossible to define, but such a definition still requires broad professional consensus in order to contribute to the normativity of ethical decisions made via this virtue. For example, what is the excellent performance of democracy? I would offer that in order not to conflict with access, intellectual freedom, and social responsibility, it could only involve promoting state stability through the means of increasing ease of access to the ability to vote in legitimate elections, advocating for new sunshine laws designed to promote information transparency in government, and the ability to more easily contact one's elected officials. The sunshine laws might overlap with the virtue of access. The next question is between which two vices does the excellent implementation of democracy exist? Anarchy and autocracy? Or something more practical, such as apathy and astroturfing?16 The point of considering the virtues and vices of democracy is not to demonstrate that it is hard to decide on the excellent use of virtues and the vices, but rather that it certainly is possible, but only by discourse and mutual agreement.

Librarianship and Eudaimonia

As the ergon rests at the beginning of an approach to virtue ethics, eudaimonia rests at its end. Eudaimonia is happiness through flourishing. In virtue ethics for individuals, one can only know if one has achieved eudaimonia at the end of one's life, when all decisions have been


16 Astroturfing is the technical term for an artificial grassroots movement. It is an attempt by a company or political organization to present the false belief that a position they favor has its origins in popular support.
made. This is because even in a life with exceptionally pleasant moments, very unfortunate things can happen at the end of the life that color the rest of the lifetime, things one has little to no control over. For this reason, the pursuit of happiness is mercurial. Developing phronēsis and diligently using the virtues to pursue one's telos or ergon only make it more probable that one will flourish. One might be happy or grow during a lifetime, but eudaimonia is a fulfillment of purpose, and knowledge of that is only available at the end of a life. From a virtue ethics approach then, an individual is better served to seek practical wisdom than flourishing, since the fruits of living in accord with one's values may be experienced throughout the course of a lifetime.

The same prohibition against seeking eudaimonia does not hold true for professional virtue ethics. The development of phronēsis is not to be expected of every librarian, or a hexis of serious disposition towards ethics, or even a decision to explore character-based ethics. Individual librarians may choose to develop phronēsis, as they might choose to learn about and adopt Kant's categorical imperative or Bentham's greatest happiness principle; it would not likely be a common occurrence. What is important to the vitality of the approach is that some librarians and library school educators decide to engage in phronēsis, enough to determine what constitutes the virtues and vices and to imagine what eudaimonia for the profession is. For professional virtue ethics, it is more appropriate to promote librarians' use of eudaimonia as their guide. This is not just because it is impractical to pursue widespread phronēsis, but because unlike with individual virtue ethics, the presence or absence of eudaimonia cannot be the answer to the question, did the profession fulfill its purpose after all of its decisions were made? This is because there is no reason to expect that librarianship, a human activity that has persisted for millennia, is going to cease anytime soon. Instead, the presence or absence of eudaimonia
answers the question, in this moment, am I fulfilling the profession's function or is what I am doing detrimental to fulfilling the profession's function? As long as librarians know the nature of the profession's function, this can be a useful question for guiding action.

Conclusion

To conclude, I return to the question of the autonomy of the library profession and the effort to reunite the librarianship and information science branches of the discipline. The reason to pursue a system of professional virtue ethics that is derived from an identity narrative is the ability to treat the future of the profession as though it were a story, a story of flourishing in keeping with the profession's virtues. This story does not ensure the course of the future, but it does establish a clear lens through which those future events might be interpreted. As I have presented it so far, the story of librarianship is the story of a profession seeking to improve the lived condition of humanity by propagating belief in the liberative power of knowledge and by working to sustain social, cultural, and political institutions that promise to sustain progress. As the profession's function is understood with greater precision and consensus emerges about the virtues and vices of the profession, the story of the profession will doubtless refine itself into sharper focus. In the mean time, the key contribution I hope to make is the idea that librarianship has an ethical character and that the decisions made by the profession create that character. Contemporary librarians and information scientists both contribute to that character every bit as much as humanitarian moralists and progressive autonomists, patriotic participants in the Library War Service and the framers of the "Library Bill of Rights," and advocates of library activism and library neutrality did. The current crisis in autonomy and division in identity is only the most recent in a long series of difficult decisions about the nature of the profession. Just because the previous crises resulted in a unified profession, it should not lead the profession to the conclusion
that this current one will simply work itself out. Instead, I hope that knowing the identity narrative of the profession and how it developed from crises such as these will lend motivation to resolve this crisis in a way that leads to a character that honors both visions for the profession. The reason to resolve the crisis in autonomy is not just to better secure the future of the profession but also to help it reach a conclusion as to the best way to improve the lived condition of humanity.

What I have discussed in the previous chapters is the potential for a character-based system of ethics to provide a method by which both branches of the discipline can understand a shared function that is more fundamental to the identity of the discipline than either approach to the commodification of knowledge. By proposing an approach to developing practical wisdom, I have sought to make the case that institutional problems such as the underrepresentation of minority populations and the acquiescence to the diminished worth of work traditionally done by women may be resolved by working with librarianship's function instead of against it. I argue that the function proposed in this study, the stability-happiness function, is not exclusive to the nature of librarians, but inclusive of information specialists and educators for library and information science as well. While I suspect that information scientists have a higher concentration of hard power than librarians do, mostly due to information scientists' association with computer science and mathematics, I would argue that they share a common function. Librarianship and information science graduate programs share an accrediting body. They share many of the same classes, which often lead to the same terminal degree.\footnote{Wallace, “The iSchools, Education for Librarianship, and the Voice of Doom and Gloom,” 406–7.} Despite differences in their preferred solutions to the problem of how society assigns value to knowledge and the difference in identity emerging from that decision, the information science branch of the
discipline has the same core affinity for the ideology of progress, if not more so. Along with that affinity, information scientists seem to derive shared benefit from stability in dominant social and cultural institutions and central state authority. Even though information scientists have a different, broader material domain that librarians do, their intellectual domains overlap significantly. The good that they do is the same expression of progress as well: knowledge leads to freedom and freedom to happiness.

I argue that while in its response to the commodification of knowledge the discipline may be conceptually divided, understanding its *ergon* reveals that the two branches of the division are trying to achieve the same function, just using different approaches. This conceptual divide is not grounds for a disciplinary separation, instead, if information science does possess more hard power than librarianship, this pairing creates the opportunity for librarianship to shed some of the sense of uncertainty about the status of the profession, while granting to information science access to librarianship's generous tradition of liberative ethics and policies. Knowledge of their mutual reliance on the ideology of progress and the corresponding problematical dependence on social and cultural stability are enough of a shared narrative foundation to overcome the identity division between information science and librarianship. Strengthening this narrative foundation may result in returning sufficient autonomy to both branches of the discipline to allow cooperation on developing *phronēsis* and a shared concept of the discipline's vices and virtues.

**Avenues for Future Research**

The ultimate goal is the creation of a system of professional virtue ethics for librarianship. Just as with the development of the deontological and utilitarian professional ethics, if the process of developing librarianship's virtue ethics proceeds, it will be a deliberative process involving many librarians, library and information science educators, and ethicists. One
of the next steps I intend to take with this study is constructing a social networking presence through which to ask the virtue and vice question. Even if visitors are not interested in engaging with the prospect of developing professional virtue ethics for librarianship, I believe there might be interest in exploring the issues of what constitutes excellence and which are the great vices of the profession. Only active discourse will resolve something as complex as the virtues of the library profession. Even if consensus is not reached, the emergence of broad categories may facilitate the publication of a proto-theory of librarianship's virtue ethics.

In addition to the establishment of a community of discourse, there are three main avenues for future research based on the findings of this study. Two of these pertain to developing a full system of virtue ethics for librarianship and one pertains to strengthening professional autonomy. The first avenue is research in refining or expanding the definition of librarianship's *ergon*, or possibly its *telos*. This study examined three crises in librarianship's history, keeping the process simple as a proof of concept. Further hermeneutical phenomenological inquiries could expand in number the crises emplotted. There is also the possibility of identifying and emplotting significant non-crisis events that are somehow indicative of the library profession's function. Another way to approach this first avenue is searching for librarianship's purpose instead of its function. Instead of looking at historical events, one way to pursue this would be to select significant texts on the theory of librarianship and engage them as hermeneutical conversation partners. These suggestions assume the continued use of the hermeneutical phenomenological methodology, but there is no reason to limit research in the *ergon* to just one method. Other possibilities include content analysis of word use in significant works of theory, surveys of current practitioners and educators, citation analyses of works published in the LIS discipline, and discourse analyses of mission or vision
statements of libraries and schools of librarianship and information science. One of the strengths of the LIS discipline is the breadth of method employed in its research. My choice of hermeneutical phenomenology as the research approach for this study reflects how I understand the problem and my belief that narrative is an effective interpretative structure for conveying complex information to as broad an audience as possible. Other researchers will have different priorities for the material and, as a result, can take any number of approaches.

The second avenue of research in virtue ethics is trying to identify what constitutes the virtues of librarianship. I mentioned above that I would start with librarianship's core values, but this is only one place to begin. Another possible conceptual approach would be a taxonomic approach, which is the *dunamis*, or potential-based, approach I mentioned in Chapter 3. By developing a systematic way of specifying all critical potential expressions of librarianship, the virtues could be determined by reasoning out which traits lead to manifesting that potential excellently. Besides the conceptual approach, simply asking librarians and library educators what they believe the virtues are would be a good start. Not only could it generate insight but also, at the very least, it would be an opportunity to communicate the viability of virtue as a concept for professional ethics.

The third avenue for research is how to use virtue ethics to promote professional autonomy. In this study I argued that librarianship and information science share a common dependence on promoting stability in society through promoting the happiness of individuals and suggested that this shared dependence could be a sufficiently strong point of commonality to resolve identity difference between the two branches of the discipline. This is the first concept that needs to be tested using a different research method. Does knowledge of not just the shared dependence but also of a shared function resolve identity conflicts? I suggest that something
along the lines of a massively open online course (MOOC) would be the perfect venue for introducing the functional argument to a diverse group of interested librarians and information scientists. Pre and post class surveys could be administered, measuring among other things attitudes towards the other branch of the discipline and perceptions of autonomy as in one's private life, in one's professional life, and for one's profession.

Resolving this identity difference is one way to promote autonomy using virtue ethics. The other way to promote autonomy is to attempt to develop phronēsis within the profession. This represents a much longer-term research arc. As I mentioned above, not everyone has to develop phronēsis for there to be a system of professional virtue ethics, but some people do. The process of promoting professional phronēsis would involve writing original, philosophical research of practical wisdom in the context of librarianship and information science. What institutional sources of wisdom exist, and how are they turned toward the profession’s decision making? This would span the many levels of librarianship from national leadership to solo librarians and across types of libraries from school to special collections libraries. How would those existing sources of practical wisdom benefit from or struggle with the ideas that are central to virtue ethics? This would be the most significant avenue for further research, examining how virtue ethics would influence existing decision-making structures for professional librarians and information scientists.

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18 A MOOC is a kind of distance education course, usually offered for free and with enrollment open to any interested parties. The large enrollment size of some MOOCs make them ideal for spreading ideas and for creating standard interpretations of those ideas.
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